

# The Beginning of The End of All Things

## Part 11

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### The Lake of Fire That Men Built

<sup>15</sup>And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. *Revelation 20:15*.

Quite a number of people have problems with this verse, and rightly so; but a few seem to be excited about the assumed prospects of the accepted teaching. The majority who blindly embrace this view would not subject their worst enemies to such a fate, especially not their own children and loved ones. Even though their most innate perception tells them otherwise, they find it hard to voice their concern or objections. For who are they to say that they are right and a multi-million membered, God ordained, religious system can be wrong? With such odds against them, for the most part, they remain silent and conclude that since God is God He can do anything that pleases Him regardless of how inhumane and unrealistic it may seem.

It is not unusual for supporters of this doctrine to say that *God really does not want to judge people so harshly*; but since men have been given *free will*, and they have been warned what their punishment will be if they refuse to obey the guidelines (some simple, some impossible), He has no choice to do otherwise. They are conditioned to see God's omnipotent hands being tied by men's free will to sin.

Perhaps they have forgotten, or were never told, what the apostle Paul said about God's will. Of course, some chose to ignore it altogether. To be reminded, he said, *God works out all things after the* <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *counsel*: Grk. *boule*; from G1014; *volition*, that is,

*counsel of His own will* (*Eph 1:11*). Simply stated, whatever God does, He does it out of His own volition. He is not forced to do so because of people having some sort of *sovereign free will* that opposes God's *impotent* will. If such were true, it would make the creature greater than the Creator. Absurd!

A large number of Christian denominations are known for having the lake of fire as a major part of their foundational beliefs. Their lake is most often called <sup>2</sup>*hell*, which is not true at all. If they were the same, we would have to strike Revelation 20:14 from the Bible; for it says that *hell is cast into the lake of fire*. This alone should stop the notion that the two are the same; for if the two are the same — how can hell be cast into itself, the lake of fire, as the scripture states?

Notwithstanding, if the hell they believe in were removed from their foundation, their theological buildings would fall in a heap. For instance, a friend of ours who had been a minister for over fifty years in one of the fundamental denominations told me that her theological building came painfully down after I shared what I saw concerning the lake of fire and God's sovereign will for His creation. She said that everything she believed in was tested unto death; for every facet of her theology was either founded on or connected to the common teachings of the lake of fire. And to destroy those beliefs, she said, destroyed everything else she had held so dear and true. The thought of having to rebuild everything was too painful to imagine. With all resolve and vehemence, she resisted. She quoted scriptures to God and herself in defense against His prevailing word. She tried to block out what she had heard, but to no avail. After literally spending three months of agonizing torment on her death-bed, she relinquished her hold on that which was going up in God's consuming flames and she received the love of the truth. She then rose from

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(objectively) *advice*, or (by implication) *purpose* (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*).

<sup>2</sup> *hell*; Greek, *hades*, meaning *unseen*. The English word *hell* comes from the Teutonic *hel*. This word originally meant *to cover*; such as, "We must *hell* the roof before the rain comes." *Hel* later referred to the goddess of the Norse underworld, which was also called *Hel*. In the Christianized form of the myth, *Hel* became *Hell*. And we have the Anglo-Saxon *helan*, and the Latin *celare*, which mean *to hide, to cover*.

her near death, revived, and lived for the first time in over seventy years.

Some may think that *eternal hellfire* that burns with sulphuric brimstone is perhaps an isolated view, but not so. Listen to one of their authorities, someone whose word is accepted as being sound by those in that field of religion. This man does not speak for them all; but what he says is not a foreign belief to many of the others. Ted Haggard, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, said, **“Hell is central to Christian belief.”** He also believes wholeheartedly in what he says is a strictly Biblical definition of hell: a real place, with real and eternal torments for the unsaved. Haggard heads the 14,000-member New Life Church in Colorado Springs.” (MSNBC Dateline, August 13, 2006).

Although it should be Jesus who is central to every person born of God, sadly, this is not always the case, and when He is not, error will be the fruit that grows from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Out of ignorance or a careless disregard for the scriptures, *hell* is believed to be the same as *the lake of fire*. When this happens, a misrepresentation of the verses that have to do with the lake of fire becomes that which is served to their congregations and television audiences.

You see, there is nothing in the apostle’s words about hell whatsoever. He plainly says — **the lake of fire, not hell**. Many mistakenly believe the two terms are synonymous and can be interchanged. For instance, a well educated medical doctor has devoted much of his life to revealing what *he* feels to be religious error that will send the vast majority to *hell* forever. This credited writer makes the same common mistake:

**“Hell,”** he says, “is described in the Bible as **‘the lake of burning sulfur,’** where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Re.20:10, 14:10-11)... **and one of the worst torments of each one of the condemned will be to realize the fact that he had in his only life on earth a thousand and one opportunities not to go to Hell, and he rejected them all....**Every time it talks about how many will go to ‘Hell,’ the word <sup>3</sup>‘many’ is used... 4 times! (Matt. 7:13-14, Matt. 7:21-23, Matt. 22:14, Luke 13:23-29).” He then adds, “To be in error in religion,

is to have a ‘cancer in the soul.’” (Jerome Domínguez, M.D, World Religions and 101 Cults and Sects).

It has been estimated by various religions that roughly 98 percent of humanity’s destiny will be burning in fire, or freezing, whether physically or mentally, and a grave number of them believe it will be without remedy and without end. Some carry the fallacy to the horrid religious end of rejoicing at the thought. After reading what one religious leader said, tell me if the spirit of religion is not evil to the core:

“‘If my own mother were being carried to the mouth of HELL I would stand and applaud.’ A professor in a mainline denominational seminary, explaining that hell will be *‘understandable,’* and the saved will rejoice in the misery of the unsaved, once the saved see the glory of Christ and the justice of God.” (Four Views on Hell, by John Walvoord, Zachary J. Hayes, Zondervan, 1996, p. 48).

One man who has influenced tens of thousands since the early sixteenth century made this statement:

“I ask whence it happened that the fall of Adam involved, ***without remedy, in eternal death to so many nations, together with their infant children,*** except because ***it so seemed good to God? A decree horrible, I confess, and yet true.***” (John Calvin, 1506 - 1564).

We are amazed that people will openly declare how God has made such a horrible decree, and then claim to *worship* Him.

We can only conclude that it must be out of utter fear that a god of this sort is worshiped, or else, the same evil they have ascribed to God is harbored in their hearts. Some, of course, worship such a god out of fear. They will believe in Him and serve Him; but they will most likely never really love Him, unless they can love an indifferent, fiendish tormentor of good people who failed to say the sinner’s prayer before breathing their last breath. As I quoted Forest Gump in our previous article, *“Stupid is as stupid does,”* and if our Father, who is love, did such a stupid thing as burning the children of His love forever, He should be called stupid. Moreover, I am not sure I would like to keep company with a god of that caliber. For that matter, I know I wouldn’t. Let me ask, could you love and have warm affections toward your natural father who tortured and killed all your brothers and sisters for failing in various ways,

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<sup>3</sup> **Hell** is neither used nor inferred in any of these four passages.

and spared only you because you told him that you loved him and would always do whatever he wished or demanded, even unto death? Again, *stupid is as stupid does*, and such would not only be stupid, but insane, and that is what they are saying about our Father!

As feeble as they are, I am sure that many ministers believe and teach their congregations these sordid views of God only because these doctrines are accepted by their churches, and accepted doctrines are very seldom questioned. They go so far as to say that even if a person has never heard that there is a living God, or has never known He has a Son who died for them, and if he hasn't been baptized (in the right manner), or joined the "church," he is doomed to burn in hell forever. Others believe God will have mercy on a man if he is a good man, since it is logically beyond his control to confess to a Savior he has never heard of. They do, however, say that if he has heard and fails to measure up to all the requirements imposed on him, he will suffer God's eternal judgment. This reminds me of the Eskimo and priest: *Eskimo*: "If I did not know about God and sin, would I go to hell?"

*Priest*: "No, not if you did not know."

*Eskimo*: "Then why did you tell me?"

I spoke with a man several years ago who expressed how greatly and grievously he was tormented by what he was taught about God and *hell*. He recently wrote about it, and Gary Amirault posted it on his web site:

"I did not know in 1939 that my life would take a whole new turn following a nervous breakdown lasting six months. This was totally and directly a result of earlier religious teachings.

"My youth consisted of much horror and mental anguish due to messages of well-meaning ministers who presented, for the most part, a god of endless anger and vengeance. Judging from how few people really lived a Holy life and how few Christians actually laid their lives down to save people from the awful fate, it appears few people really took the threat of everlasting punishment seriously. I was not one of them. I took it VERY seriously--so seriously that I vowed never to have children, so as to be sure none of mine would go to hell. After all, based upon the churches own statistics, 98 percent of humanity was doomed to be tortured forever and ever and ever by

their loving god. I had a vasectomy to insure that I would not bring into this world a child doomed to be among the 98 percent of humanity which would find itself burning alive forever.

"Like I said, most people in my church and other churches must not have taken the Hell teaching to heart or else I think they all would have gone mad. And I believe those who truly DO take it seriously DO go crazy. A friend of the family had committed suicide because of the same hellfire and damnation teachings. There are countless stories of mental disorders which led to disastrous results due to this terrible doctrine. In years past, I often prayed that God would take me 'Home' (kill me) so I would not be lost." (Mervin Behlen). (For complete testimony go to <http://www.tentmaker.org/testimonials/MervinLBehlen.html>.)

As dreadful as the doctrine of hell can be, Christianity has not by any means been alone in believing it. If there is a religion in the world that does not have some form of *a tormenting hell* in their doctrines, I am not aware of it. As it is with the Christian faiths, some believe it will be endless while others believe there will be an end to the torment; but most believe it will be for a very, very long time. For instance, the Buddhists believe in sixteen hells (eight cold and eight hot) to which a person will be subjected, depending on the severity of their sins. One of those hells is called the *Arbuda*, or the *blister Naraka*. It is said to be a dark, frozen plain surrounded by icy mountains. It is continually blown over by ice storms and blizzards. The unlucky inhabitants of this world abide there naked and alone while the cold raises caustic blisters all over their bodies. The length of time in this realm of hell is said to be the time it would take for a sparrow to empty a barrel of sesame seeds if the bird took a single seed every hundred years. This is not forever, but it is a very long period of time, and is another manmade hell to scare people into remaining obedient subjects of their manmade religions that are always inspired by the dragon of the air.

Whether forever or for a very long period of time, it is commonly believed that the punishment in the afterlife for unbelievers and evildoers is incomprehensible. One such manmade hell says that fire alone is not enough. We are told that demons

will also be there to torment the damned forever, and the devil, *the fallen* <sup>4</sup>*archangel Lucifer*, of course, is commonly portrayed as the elated ruler over the infernal mess.

Almost all religions regard hell as the absolute, ultimate, worst case scenario. However, purgatory, as believed by most Catholics, lifts the eternal burden to a small degree. Purgatory was proclaimed as an article of faith in 1439 by the Council of Florence, and was later confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1548. It is said to be a place of penance for sinners who have achieved salvation but have not paid penance (self-abasement) for the sins that they committed prior to dying. Whether by design or an oversight, these two councils failed to include in this article of faith how long certain classes of people would be held in purgatory. Moreover, they did not appoint anyone, not even the Pope, who could say when they were released and carried to heaven.

Therefore, with millions of masses having been performed since the Florentine Council, and with tens of billions of dollars worth of indulgences having been paid for the dead, there is not one person who can say if anyone has been released from purgatory. Even after a thousand generations of people have prayed their rosaries on behalf of dead, there will be no one who can tell you if anyone has ever made it to heaven.

Hinduism has beliefs of various hells. These are places wherein sinful people are punished. In many of the Hindu hells, the residents are tortured by demons; however, these hells are not final dwelling places. They are much like purgatories where sinful souls experience suffering, but for a limited season. Afterwards, even the most evil person is released to once again be reincarnated. This differs from Catholicism's belief where the very evil will burn in hell forever.

If we wanted to find a common thread that has been woven through the fabric of most of the religions of the world, it would be this one point of blasphemous torture for most of God's creation. This God that they lower to such a loathing level is my Father, and yours, and it is, therefore, very easy for me to call them the generation of vipers that they are, and I know most of you feel the same.

Fortunately, not everyone blindly follows the

blind and falls into the ditch with them. Let us note the insight of a few among the millions who could think outside of religion's walls and had backbone enough to question the deplorable caricature of our God who is infinite love:

"God so loved the world that he made up his mind to damn a large majority of the human race." (Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll, 1833 - 1899).

"Men have ascribed to God imperfections that they would deplore in themselves." (William Somerset Maugham, 1874 - 1965).

"God says, 'Do what you wish, but make the wrong choice and you will be tortured for eternity in hell.' That sir....would be akin to a man telling his girlfriend, do what you wish, but if you choose to leave me, I will track you down and blow your brains out. When a man says this we call him a psychopath and cry out for his imprisonment/execution. When God says the same we call Him 'loving' and build churches in his honor." (William C. Easttom II).

Regarding Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* painting: ".....Look at the lower parts of the picture, where with pitchforks men are by devils being cast into cauldrons and into burning fires, where hateful fiends are gnawing at the skulls of suffering sinners, and where there is hellish cannibalism going on. Let a man look at that picture and the scenes which it depicts, and he sees what were the ideas which men once had of Hell and of divine justice. It was a nightmare as hideous as was ever begotten by the hellish brood itself; and it was an atrocious slander on God.....I do not wonder that men have reacted from these horrors—I honor them for it." (Henry Ward Beecher, 1813 - 1887, prominent theological American Congregationalist clergyman and social reformer).

It is mind-boggling, to say the least, that brilliant men with high degrees in theological education refuse to hear and speak the truth. If someone like myself, with limited formal education, can search out God's truths that are so simple that a child would not err therein, you would think they could do better, but we have not seen that happening.

For instance, it would not be difficult for them to discover the origin of this doctrine that drags the character of our merciful God through the mud, and the revelation of it may change a few in the way they believe. I did a quick search on the origin of hell and

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<sup>4</sup> *"The Lucifer Question"* free upon request.

found this among too many to include in this short article:

“*Polybius* (203-120 B.C.), the ancient historian, said: ‘Since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, **there is no other way to keep them in order but by the fear and terror of the invisible world; on which account our ancestors seem to me to have acted judiciously, when they contrived to bring into the popular belief these notions of the gods, and of the infernal regions.**’ B. vi 56....

“*Plato*, in his commentary on *Timaeus*, fully endorses what he says respecting the fabulous invention of these foreign torments. And *Strabo* says that **‘Plato and the Brahmins of India invented fables concerning the future judgments of hell’ (Hades)**. And *Chrysippus* blames *Plato* for attempting to deter men from wrong by frightful stories of future punishments.

“*Plato* himself is exceedingly inconsistent, sometimes adopting, even in his serious discourses, the fables of the poets, and at other times rejecting them as utterly false, and giving too frightful views of the invisible world. Sometimes, he argues, **on social grounds, that they are necessary to restrain bad men from wickedness and crime, and then again he protests against them on political grounds, as intimidating the citizens, and making cowards of the soldiers, who, believing these things, are afraid of death, and do not therefore fight well. But all this shows in what light he regarded them; not as truths, certainly, but as fictions, convenient in some cases, but difficult to manage in others.**” (Thomas B. Thayer, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment).

When renowned church leaders ignore such basic facts of history that are so easily obtained, and refuse to heed proper translations of the scriptures, we cannot help from believing that they are so lacking in the Spirit that it is impossible for them to see the obvious, or else, they see but deliberately refuse to receive the love of the truth and will do everything in their power to destroy it.

Ray Prinzing certainly understood this and wrote about receiving the love of the truth:

“Two ways are set before us here: receiving the love of the truth to work into us into salvation; or, receiving a strong delusion, literally, an inworking

delusion, so that we believe a lie. Interestingly enough, God sends them both. He brings forth vessels of mercy, and vessels of wrath.

“Those who refuse, who receive not the love of the truth, in turn will receive an inworking error, and then have to pass through a judgment to be purged of that error. This is learning the lesson the hard way, having to go through a process of correctional chastening, until they learn that it is far better to receive the love of the truth. Yet God retains sovereign control over this entire process. ‘I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them, because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before Mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.’ (Isa. 66:4). God knows exactly which inworking delusion will subdue and teach that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake the way of the Lord.

“There is a love to be received along with the truth, for knowledge alone will not hold you. When the vision tarries you soon become entangled in all sorts of strange diversions, and a prey for those spoken of in *Daniel* 11:14, ‘the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision – as if they were able to fulfill it, but they shall fail. When you have a LOVE FOR THE TRUTH you will not want to exert any self-effort, destroy, mar, or try to fulfill it after the flesh. You will wait with an eye single to God knowing He will fulfill His Word. ‘Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.’ (Ps.119:165).” (Daily Overcoming Devotionals, August 26).

Regardless of the reason for not receiving the love of the truth, it is clear that the *hell* which is taught in the mainline Christian churches is made by men. To compound their folly, they carelessly say that this manmade horror is in fact *the lake of fire*. While doing so, they never mention that it is actually the all consuming glory of God’s presence which brings an end to all sin and death on every level. The very thing that marks the end of all evil, conflict, rebellion, inordinate passions, sorrow, and suffering, they say is endless suffering.

My Lord and my God! Where is their love, not only for their own, but for their enemies as well?

Jesus said to “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”

**Matt. 5:44.** But those of the church system, those who have been bitten and smitten by the ancient serpent say otherwise. Although without authority, they pronounce eternal judgment upon the lost and forlorn of the world. This wayward decree never forgives them, and consigns them to burn in hell forever with no hope of remedy or escape. Brethren, there is something vastly wrong with this picture. Nevertheless, this is how it is portrayed by those who say they are in the *image* of Christ! Do you suppose they have not only created a lake of fire after their own hearts, but have also created a god after their own image and likeness? And do you suppose it is this fearful god that they worship, and to whom they sacrifice their children? The answers are a resounding **yes!** That is, if they worship such a god and teach their children to do the same.

Paul echoed our Lord's words in **Romans 12:20.** "If your enemy hungers, feed him, If he thirsts, give him drink; For in doing so you will heap coals of fire on his head." I have heard this verse quoted more times than I can remember by Christians who are praying for their enemies, but for the purpose of vengeance and wanting God to torment them by burning down their home, setting up a car-wreck, or some other calamity that will serve them right. As vindictive as these coals of fire may seem, listen to what a well-known Baptist minister said about them. He is a man I would like to know:

"In conversation with a wife who was embroiled in a domestic conflict I asked if she had ever tried heaping coals of fire on his head. She confessed she had not but that she tried throwing boiling water on him once.

"What does it mean?

"The two opening statements in this verse obviously teach we are to do more than is required to help those in need. "In the biblical era fire was a valuable commodity. Often a person would go to a neighbor and ask for a coal with which to start his fire. This expression means don't just give him the basic essential. Instead give him so many coals that they are so heavy he has to carry them on his head as was the custom with heavy loads. Thus, we are taught a lesson in helpful generosity." (Dr. Nelson L. Price).

If those who read these few pages truly believe in a god who will torment the majority of his own

creation forever in a literal lake of fire that burns with literal flames, then please hear me, and harken to my sobering words:

If you are a male, do as Mervin Behlen did — do not delay, but rush to your doctor and get a vasectomy. If you are a female of child bearing age — do not delay, but rush to your doctor and have your tubes tied. Whatever you do, **don't have any babies**, and if you already have some, don't have anymore. If you bear children after reading this, I must conclude that you either don't believe the damnable doctrine of eternal punishment, or you will gamble with their lives in hopes that they will jump through a religious hoop and get *saved* before they die. If neither of the two are accurate, and you still believe in everlasting doom for the lost, can it be that you don't love your children enough to care what their eternal fate might be?

If you truly love your children, and you believe that there is one chance in a million that at least one of them could possibly fail to be saved after *the age of accountability*, what would stop you from doing the unthinkable? For example, Andrea Yates, a Houston, Texas mother who drowned her five children said, "I killed them so their souls would go to heaven." Her defense attorney said almost the same on her behalf: "She didn't know what she was doing because she thought she was saving her children's souls by sending them to heaven."

How many other parents have done the same? The thought of eternal damnation has driven countless people insane, and perhaps this woman as well; how many others, we may wonder, have killed their babies to insure their *eternal security*.

I have made pointed statements, sober suggestions, and asked thought-provoking questions. Now, if you can still hold to such teachings that are so far removed from God as the east is from the west, before casting my proposals into a manmade hell, will you think soberly and make some sobering decisions? Perhaps, to rethink your beliefs and receive the love of the truth. I sincerely hope you do; for it concerns me greatly when people professing Jesus as their Lord so impudently malign my Father.

I can see clearly why Jesus was so critical of the religious leaders. They were dragging the intent of the God's holy Law through the mud of legalism; but

not only that, they had degraded the Living God, His Father, and made Him one to fear and avoid at all cost, which seems very similar to what we see today.

Some will, no doubt, be disturbed by my unminced accusations toward those who speak evil of my Father; but anyone who sits idle when their father, natural or spiritual, is called worse than a diabolical infidel, must be pitied for their complacent gutlessness. Furthermore, I don't know of anyone, past or present, who was more blistering to the religious rulers than was Jesus, and they accused Him of being a bastard, and attributed His deeds to the working of demons.

He responded by calling them whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. And no less than four times He called them a generation of vipers who neglected the weightier matters of justice, such as mercy and faithfulness.

Therefore, by seeing the same spirit working in the majority of the religious figureheads today, let it stand — they will have their part in the lake of fire; but be sure to know, it will not be the lake that they have made. And they can thank God for that!

We have only skimmed the surface of *the lake of fire that men have made*; but we trust that little more needs to be said about such a dark and dismal subject. Now that we have dealt a little about the inspired fruit of the religious dragon of the air, hopefully, we can now take more time and see ***the glorious lake of fire that God has made!***

To be continued...

Elwin R. Roach