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End of the Wicked

fiery final Judgment



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Fire Came Down from God

For many people the description of the fiery judgment after the millennium is the final irrefutable proof that God directly kills people:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (8) And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. (9) And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (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. *Rev 20:7-10*

The superficial reading of Scripture in combination with such a difficult text, not only could easily drive someone to the idea that God kills, but also that hell will last forever, because earlier in Revelation we find the following statement concerning the same event:

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 14:11*

To stand on the immutable foundation of truth, the advent movement was called to follow the rules of Bible interpretation that stem from the Bible itself:

Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled "Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology," Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation: {RH November 25, 1884, par. 23}

"1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible; 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. **To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures**

together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error; 5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible.”

The above is a portion of these rules; **and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth.** {RH November 25, 1884, par. 23-25}

Only when all the scriptures on a certain subject agree, can we be sure that our theory is truth. The greatest contradiction in an interpretation which presents God as the direct executor of the wicked in the lake of fire is the life of Jesus Christ. Christ came to fully reveal the character of His Father and when we look at His life on the earth, we can surely know what God is like:

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? *John 14:9*

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do... (6) I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. *John 17:4, 6*

The work of the good Samaritan represents Christ's mission to the world. **Our Saviour came to reveal the character of God, to represent his love for man. He acted just as the Father would have done in all emergencies.** Christ manifested for us a love that the love of man can never equal. He died to save those who were his enemies; he prayed for his murderers. HM October 1, 1897.

When Christ was here on the earth, He killed no one:

Herod and the wicked authorities killed the Just One, **but Christ never killed anyone,** and we may attribute the spirit of

persecution—because men want liberty of conscience—to its origin—Satan. *Ms62-1886.64*

Whatever event is described in Revelation 20, it cannot be in contradiction to the revelation which the Son of God gave of His Father while He was on the earth. Having this in mind we will examine the factors that contribute to the events in Rev 20:7-10, as they are explained throughout the Bible.

The Word and the Mirror of Nature

The Scriptures tell us that God (1) created the world by His Word, (2) He continues to sustain it by that same Word, and that (3) this Word is His only begotten Son:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.... (9) For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. *Psalms 33:6, 9*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. *John 1:1-3*

Who (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (16) For **by him were all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (17) And he is before all things, and **by him all things consist**. *Colossians 1:15-17*

Since all things "consist", by the Son of God, it means that without the constant working of His power, there would be a total chaos. See how this was expressed by A. T. Jones:

So then God was manifest in Christ by His word in creating and is still manifest thus, in the created things—in creating, in preserving, holding together, and holding up. So that gravitation is God in Jesus Christ. Science tells us that the law of gravitation holds things up, you know; but what is gravitation? "Why, that is what holds things up." There is a better answer than that. That answer is gravitation, the law of gravitation, holds all these things

up and in their places. **But what is gravitation? It is the power of God manifested in Jesus Christ in creation; that is gravitation.**

Cohesion, in science, is to hold together. But what is cohesion? All the answer that science can give is, the word “cohesion” is from two Latin words, co and haerere, signifying to hold together; in other words, cohesion is cohesion; that is the answer. There is a better answer than that. There is God’s answer, and He tells us that **cohesion is the power of God manifested in Jesus Christ in creation; for by Him all things consist, cohere, hold together; that is cohesion.** *GCB/GCDB 1893, p. 441. 6, 7*

Everything in the world is sustained by the power of God in His Word – our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is one thing that can unsettle the order sustained by this power, and that thing is sin:

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. (11) And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; (12) When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. *Gen 4:10-12*

The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. (5) The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. (6) Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. *Isaiah 24:3-6*

The Relationship between Man and the Earth

Notice that the curse which came from Cain’s murdering of his brother, included inanimate nature. The reason for this was because Adam as the head (having dominion) of the earthly creation was in a divine pattern relation with nature:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and **let them have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and **over all the earth**, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth... And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and **have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. *Gen 1:26, 28*

After Adam had fallen, the earth and everything in it started reflecting his rebellion against God. This explains the phenomena of animal rapacity, and poisonous weed vegetation:

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground for thy sake**; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; (18) **Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee**; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; *Gen 3:17, 18*

In the divine pattern the earth and everything upon it is a mirror of man. God did this so that man would be able to look at occurrences in nature and recognize that something was wrong in his relationship with God and righteousness due to sin. Chaos in nature was a manifestation of chaos in the psyche of man, done so that man would have a visual so that he could easier understand, and then repent. If man was in harmony with God, the Earth would also reflect that in bringing forth good fruit.

This is why, when the nations surrounding Israel insisted on remaining in their idolatry, they received the following reflection of their own rebellion back from the earth they were living upon:

And **the land is defiled**: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants... (28) That **the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations** that were before you. *Leviticus 18:25, 28*

The earth also reveals what was sown on it by the enemy of God:

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, **didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?** (28) He said unto them, **An enemy hath done this.** *Matt 13:27, 28*

The enemy in the Lord's field was Satan, who after the fall of our first parents, claimed ownership over our world:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. (7) And the Lord said unto Satan, **Whence comest thou?** Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, **From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.** *Job 1:6, 7*

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. (6) And the devil said unto him, **All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.** (7) If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. *Luke 4:5-7*

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for **the prince of this world** cometh, and hath nothing in me; *John 14:30*

Therefore from the days of Adam's fall the earth reflects Adam's character of rebellion toward God through the influence of his new master, Satan.

Under the curse of sin all nature was to witness to man of the character and results of rebellion against God. **When God made man He made him rule over the earth and all living creatures. So long as Adam remained loyal to Heaven, all nature was in subjection to him. But when he rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures were in rebellion against his rule. Thus the Lord, in His great mercy, would show men the sacredness of His law, and lead them, by their own experience, to see the danger of setting it aside, even in the slightest degree.** PP 59, 60

Not only had man come under the power of the deceiver, **but the earth itself, the dominion of man, was usurped by the enemy.** {Bible Echo July 15, 1893}

The Flood Operates on the Same Principle

If it hadn't been for God's grace through Christ, Satan would have destroyed all his subjects. Satan takes advantage of people only when they become agents of his philosophy - sin. Thus during the time before the flood, he delighted that humanity reflected his character. People so much coalesced to and confirmed themselves in their sins, that this would lead to withdrawal of God's sustaining power in Christ throughout the world:

And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. *Gen 6:3*

The people before the flood were rejecting God's merciful invitation through Noah and were rebutting the pleading Spirit of Christ. God predicted that, at this pace of going deeper into wickedness, after 120 years, the people would have completely crucified Christ in themselves and thus the sustaining power of God in Christ would have been removed/crucified and the earth would be allowed to fully manifest the character of their fall:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that **by the word of God** the heavens were of old, and the earth **standing out of the water** and in the water: 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.** *2 Peter 3:5-7*

The people before the flood did not recognize that the power of Christ was that which rallied the elements of the world. They thought that the processes of nature were sustained by an inherent power contained in nature itself and therefore Noah's warning for the coming flood seemed irrational to them. However, the Scripture tells us that the power which sustains everything is Christ – the living Word of God. Here Peter shows *that the same process that led to a flood of water will also lead to the fiery flood after the millennium, and as the former was caused by the crucifixion of the living Word of God, so the latter will be caused by a similar process.* The hearts of men were completely hardened in their total rejection of the pleading of Christ; their

final response to His Spirit was to lash out to kill it. The eviction of the Spirit of God through the people's sins that lived before the flood, was the reason for that flood:

Because they rejected the warning, **the Spirit of God was withdrawn from the sinful race**, and they perished in the waters of the Flood. *GC 431.1*

Filled with the keenest remorse for his own sin, and doubly bereaved in the death of Abel and the rejection of Cain, Adam was bowed down with anguish. He witnessed the **widespread corruption that was finally to cause the destruction of the world by a flood**; *PP 82.2*

This becomes clear by a careful reading of Genesis 6:

Gen 6:13-14 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy [Strong H7843] them with the earth. (14) Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

If we examine the word *destroy* in Hebrew we will see that it means:

H 7843: A primitive root; to decay, i.e. (causatively) ruin (literally or figuratively) -- batter, cast off, **corrupt**(-er, thing), destroy(-er, -uction), lose, mar, perish, spill, spoiler, X utterly, waste(-r).

This same word is used in the verses just before thirteen:

Gen 6:11-12 The earth also was corrupt [H7843] before God, and the earth was filled with violence. (12) And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt [H7843]; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

If we apply the word *destroy*, which the translators used for the same Hebrew word in Gen 6:13 then the text will be as follows:

Gen 6:11-12 The earth also was *destroyed* before God, and the earth was filled with violence. (12) And God looked upon the

earth, and, behold, it was *destroyed*; for all flesh had *destroyed* his way upon the earth.

The earth itself was stained with the immorality and violence of men and therefore God saw that in its final phase that the earth would express man's rebellion. This is why Jesus in the days of His earthly life said to the multitude:

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, **I judge him not:** for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. (48) He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.** *John 12:47-48*

Here Jesus separates Himself from the work of judgment that operates in His Word to show that in His Word, which “upholds the things” (Heb 1:3), He has an independent and impartial arbiter which reflects back men’s wickedness and punishes them when they refuse to repent. Because of this, when Christ returns the second time He is represented in the following manner:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness **he doth judge and make war.** (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. (13) And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and **his name is called The Word of God.** (14) And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. (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... *Rev 19:11-15*

The Mirror of the Law

Jesus returns as the representative of His Father’s character. As the living Word of God, He embodies the principles of God’s law of love. But this same love which works in saving all penitent sinners, at the same time turns out to be a “deadly savour” in the wicked:

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest **the savour of his knowledge** by us in every place. (15) For we are unto God **a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:** (16) To the one we are **the savour of death unto death;** and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? *2 Cor 2:14-16*

The same love of God which is life giving for the righteous is deadly for the wicked. Notice carefully that **love does not change its qualities**, because it is the same savour for the two classes of people, but its impact depends on what kind of a person it is revealed to. This process is explained in the fact that when the wicked see God as He is – absolute unselfish love, in the light of this presence their sins show themselves in their real enormity, their self-deception is swept away by the pure light of truth, and thus the deadly results of sin fall on them, confirming that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). If God was the source of that death, then the verse would have to say *the wages of God for sin is death*. But God is not the source of death. Therefore by allowing sin to burn up the wicked, death itself ceases to exist:

And **death** and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Rev 20:14

If God is the direct executioner of this judgment then death would be immortalized in God. Yet we know that in our heavenly Father there is no darkness whatsoever:

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. James 1:17

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is **no darkness at all**. 1 John 1:5

Why is it so difficult for humans to understand the manner in which creation responds/reacts to sin, therefore misunderstanding God as a destroyer? It is because we ourselves are, without the mind of Christ, little destroyers, made in the image of our carnal father Satan, who is THE destroyer (John 8:44, Rev

9:11). We look at the law and the law-upholder and see our own face as in a mirror.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]... *James 1:23*

Concerning the reflective property of the law there are many examples provided in Scripture. Jesus allowed for the development of such a process, when His disciples held in themselves the national sin of racial intolerance:

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. (22) And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. (23) **But he answered her not a word.** And his disciples came and besought him, saying, **Send her away; for she crieth after us.** (24) But he answered and said, **I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** (25) Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. (26) But he answered and said, **It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.** (27) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. (28) Then Jesus answered and said unto her, **O woman, great is thy faith:** be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. *Matt 15:21-28*

In this situation, in His capacity as the living Law of God / Word of God, Jesus reflected His disciples' racial intolerance back to them so that He might help them see their sin, and also to test the faith of the woman from Sidon who needed to overcome her own prejudices against a Jewish messiah. We can see how in this case the law did not reflect the true character of God, but rather the disciples' sinful thoughts, because the disciples were hearing and not doing the law:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (23) **For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;** *James 1:22-23*

Another similar example we can find in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus:

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; (23) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. *Luke 16:22-24*

In this parable **Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ's words.** The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as **to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions. He held up before His hearers a mirror wherein they might see themselves in their true relation to God.** He used the prevailing opinion to convey the idea He wished to make prominent to all—that no man is valued for his possessions; for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord. A misuse of these gifts will place him below the poorest and most afflicted man who loves God and trusts in Him. *COL 263.2*

The aim of this process, where the law reflects the sinner's thinking, is to help the sinner see his unveiled condition – a diagnosis of his “true relation to God” – to lead him to repentance so that he might be enabled to receive God's abundant saving grace:

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. *Rom 5:20*

However when the sinners rejected every opportunity that God had given them and they had completely identified themselves with their sins, then the same reflecting function of the law will allow their destruction by their sins:

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 who 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?" *RH April 1, 1875, par. 7*

The Revelation of the Cross

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. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father." *GC 652.1*

On the cross it is seen that sin is indeed death. God stated this from the very beginning:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. *Gen 2:17*

The reason why Adam and Eve did not die immediately was because Christ had started dying in their stead:

...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. *Rev 13:8*

Adam embraced the philosophy of Satan, and that was outwardly manifested through eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. According to this philosophy, God was not truly concerned about man's well-being, and His gifts were only the means through which He put everyone in His kingdom under His submission:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: (5)
For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
Gen 3:4, 5

The Hiding of God's Face

With this thinking Adam and his wife started believing that it is not sin that leads to death but rather that God murders the transgressor of His law. This explains their reaction after their fall:

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and **Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God** amongst the trees of the garden. *Gen 3:8*

This thinking stuck deeply in the minds of all of Adam's descendants. Now we can more easily understand why the natural man sees in the death on Calvary a direct act of God:

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: **yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God**, and afflicted. *Isaiah 53:4*

It was not God but sin that killed Jesus on the cross, hiding His Father's merciful face:

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? *Matt 27:46*

Here Jesus speaks from the first words of Psalm 22, which predicted 1000 years earlier His experience on the cross. Further in this Psalm we see the truth of whether the Father hid His face from His Son:

For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; **neither hath he hid his face from him**; but when he cried unto him, he heard. *Psalm 22:24*

The Father was there and suffered with His Son, yet Jesus could not feel that, because the guilt for the sin of the world surrounded Him in darkness:

In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. **The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed.** Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. {DA 753.4}

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at **the hiding of His Father's face**—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, **It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt**; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. DA 755.1

The face of God appears to be hidden from His dear Son, because at that precise moment Christ was the Sin-Bearer:

God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. **He Himself assumes toward the Sin-Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father.**
FLB 104.7

God did not cease from loving His Son. God is love and He does not change His person and His character. Then what does it mean that toward the Sin-Bearer He assumes the character of a judge? This means that **from the sin-bearer's point of view the merciful attributes of our heavenly Father are**

not seen, because the philosophy of sin hides them from him. This state of being disconnected from God and left to the results of sin is God's wrath:

He, the Sin Bearer, **endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.** *DA 755.1*

This is not any kind of character change on the part of God, where He ceases from showing mercy because His patience has ended. This is the way the sinner sees God. We see how Cain expresses this thinking after he had slain his brother:

And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. (margin: My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven)
Gen 4:13

The translator's margin notes show how the Hebrew includes the idea that Cain thought his guilt was unforgivable. This thought is also translated in the Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition as well as Wycliffe's translation

And Cain said to the Lord: My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon. *Gen 4:13 (DRA)*

And Cain said to the Lord, My wickedness is more than that I deserve forgiveness (for); *Gen 4:13 (Wycliffe)*

Adam Clarke says this in his commentary about Genesis 4:13:

The original words may be translated, "***Is my crime too great to be forgiven?***" – words which we may presume he uttered on the verge of black despair. It is most probable that [the Hebrew word] *avon* signifies rather the *crime* than the *punishment*; in this sense it is used in Lev 26:41; Lev 26:43; 1 Sam 28:10; 2 Kings 7:9; and [the Hebrew word] *nasa* signifies to remit or forgive. **The marginal reading is, therefore, to be preferred to that in the text.**

This is the thinking of sin. It is by such deceit that sin murders man, using the Law of God:

And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (11) For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, **deceived me, and by it slew me.** *Rom 7:10, 11*

Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which **frameth mischief by a law?** *Ps 94:20*

All of sin's weight, with the terribly errant thinking and understanding that goes with it, pressed down upon Jesus and smashed His soul, hiding His dear Father's face:

Satan, with his fierce temptations, **wrung the heart of Jesus. Sin, so hateful to His sight, was heaped upon Him till He groaned beneath its weight.** No wonder that His humanity trembled in that fearful hour. Angels witnessed with amazement the despairing agony of the Son of God, *so much greater than His physical pain that the latter was hardly felt by Him.* The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight. *SR 225.2*

It was not until this happened that it became apparent that the fruit of sin is "you will surely die" (Gen 2:17). No man had ever fell into the complete blackness of the final death caused by sin before Jesus did, and no man has since Jesus died. For men who reject His sacrifice, they will understand the feeling Jesus felt at the end of the 1000 years at the 2nd resurrection.

No one ever died such a death as that which Jesus died, and therefore Scripture calls Him the first begotten of the dead or the firstborn from the dead, despite the fact He was not chronologically the first who was resurrected from the grave:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead,... *Rev. 1:5*

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. *Col 1:18*

Scripture shows that God does not count as absolute the death wherewith all people of human history have died – it is only sleep:

And many of them that **sleep in the dust** of the earth shall awake, **some** to everlasting life, and **some** to shame and everlasting contempt. *Dan 12:2*

Even the unrighteous are presented as sleeping, because this is not the ultimate death. Jesus's statements concerning the sleeping righteous are even stronger:

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, (32) I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. *Matt 22:31, 32*

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: (26) **And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.** Believest thou this? *John 11:25, 26*

The Judgment

Our loving Father gave His precious Son to a death which comes from our sins – a death from which His Son would never have been resurrected, had He committed even one sin. He did this so that we might be treated the way His Son deserves, and that is to live forever. However, because God does not force anyone to accept His Son's substitute death, there will be a second death:

And I saw **a great white throne, and him that sat on it**, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. (12) **And I saw the dead**, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead** were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) And the sea gave up **the dead** which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged **every man according to their works.** (14) **And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** *Rev 20:11-15*

This text is found just after the description of the fire that consumes the wicked, which is the topic of our study. It appears as an explanation of those verses, because it repeats the event in another way. It shows that the judgment comes from the manifestation of the character of the One sitting on the great white throne. It is also important to note that those who receive the judgment are called dead (even after they are resurrected), and this is so because they are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1, 2, 5). Therefore their judgment is just a manifestation of what had already happened spiritually to them. Death and hell are also thrown in the lake of fire, which means that the judgment could not be executed directly by God, otherwise in His person death would be immortalized instead of being thrown into the lake of fire. At the end, the

judgment over these people is the result of their refusal to accept Christ's substitute death on their behalf. It means that Christ's death on the cross is very similar to the death of these people, because they die consumed by their sins:

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned **without the camp**. (12) Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered **without the gate**. *Heb 13:11-12*

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 753.2

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

Without, or outside the camp means the place where the sin bearer cannot see our Father's merciful face. Jesus speaks about this place in the following manner:

And his lord was wroth, and **delivered him to the tormentors**, till he should pay all that was due unto him. (35) **So likewise shall my heavenly Father** do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. *Matt 18:34, 35*

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Matt 13:42*

Then **said the king to the servants, Bind** him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into **outer darkness**; there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**. *Matt 22:13*

Spiritual darkness is the state where sinners become so much one with the

philosophy of sin, that they are no longer able to behold and perceive the light from the character of God. In every case where Jesus speaks about this place/condition, the judgment is mediated through someone else: the "tormentors" or "servants," "will bind them" and "throw them", which confirms the idea that God is not the direct executioner of the death sentence; this is done by their own sins before the face of His glorious and loving presence:

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.**

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.

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, **the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences.** The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. **Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character.** Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. *DA 764.1-3*

In the light of the cross we can understand that God's wrath is very different from what many people think.

Christ felt much as sinners will feel *when the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them.* Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. 2T 210.1

Here is one biblical definition of God's anger:

And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. (5) And when he had looked round about on them with **anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts**, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. *Mark 3:4, 5*

Jesus' anger comes from His grieving because of the hardening of human hearts. It was not an anger which could make Him destroy people, for that would break the 6th Commandment and go against His character, but a sorrow coming from the fact that His children allowed sin to separate them from Him and hence to deprive them from His blessings – ultimately leading to their death, as they cut themselves off from the source of life. The very next act of Jesus was not a murder, but the merciful healing of the man with the withered hand.

So what does the mystery of the cross reveal to us concerning the way the wicked will die after the millennium? The thing that killed Christ was not His physical suffering from the nails and the beating; we are told that the physical suffering was barely felt by Him because His soul anguish that came from the guilt of the world was so much greater than his physical pain. We also know the physical suffering was inspired by Satan and not God from the point that Satan entered into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. We are told that the death of the wicked will be very similar. Actually, in terms of them being killed by their sins before the light of God's holy law, their death is absolutely identical to that of Christ, who was the first to die by this type of death so that no one would need to die by it. The only difference is that Christ is able to hold on in faith to the mercy of His Father, believing Psalm 16:10-11 and therefore sin doesn't separate Him from His Father, whereas the sinner believes the separation is complete and that God *will* leave his soul in hell.

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made

known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy
with thy countenance. *Acts 2:27-28*

It is this faith in God's mercy, when all our sins are bearing upon us and we are in darkness, that Jesus offers to us. It is here that Jesus overcame the world's hardness of heart..

The Divine Pattern of the Fire

The physical and spiritual suffering of Jesus follows the divine model of source and channel:

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and **of the Father, and of Christ; (3) In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** *Col 2:2-3*

But to us there is but **one God, the Father, of whom** are all things, and we in him; and one **Lord Jesus Christ, by whom** are all things, and we by him. *1 Cor 8:6*

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (3) **Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,...**
Heb 1:1-3

The invisible God was manifested through His Son – our Lord Jesus Christ. As begotten by God, Christ manifests and exalts His Father's glory. Through this pattern of relationship we can understand better the relation between Christ's physical (visible) and spiritual (invisible) suffering on the cross. The conclusion from this pattern is that the source of Christ's sufferings was sin rather than His physical ill-treatment. Christ died from the guilt of sin that crushed His soul, not from His physical crucifixion on the cross. That is why Pilate was surprised he died so fast, for physically it should have taken much longer (see Mark 15:44); the two criminals next to Jesus were still alive when Jesus died and needed their legs broken to die quicker (John 19:31-33).

The physical suffering was only an expression of His soul anguish. Thus with

those who die in the second death, the source of suffering is spiritual – the fiery consuming of their sins before the face of their loving Father and His Son. Therefore the spiritual suffering comes through the sense of guilt and the physical suffering is a manifestation of satanic fury.

Again this is demonstrated in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The sinner slew the animal and then it was consumed by fire at the altar. By this symbol it was shown that the source of suffering and death is not the physical fire that consumed the sacrifice, but the experience of the guilt for sins. Through the confession of sins over the innocent sacrifice and the slaying by hand, the sinner should realize that his sin was what killed Christ. We also know that God told Elijah that He was not in the fire (1 Kings 19:12). Yet when the Israelites came to Sinai they perceived the glory of the Lord as devouring fire (Ex 24:17). Their false perception of God deceived them, and being deceived this false perception struck fear into their hearts and eventually slew them in the wilderness (Num 14:20-29). Thus the devouring fire is a response to the sinner's perception of judgment. God is not in the fire, but the presence of God causes the fury in the sinner to manifest as fire. Sin takes occasion by the commandment and slays the sinner (Rom 7:11).

On the cross Christ died by the sword of the Word which reflected the guilt for the sins of the whole world, which Jesus bore on Himself. Likewise the wicked after the millennium perish from the suffering of the soul in the full realization of the nature of their sins before the face of God's wonderful character, and the consuming of their bodies in the physical fire is but the outward expression of this. Internal guilt and fire in the soul will manifest in literal fire. This teaches us the divine pattern. While we trace this process, as it is described in the Spirit of Prophecy, we will also find a confirmation for the fact that the direct source of the physical fire is not God but rather the guilty reaction to the loving character of God.

The Divine Pattern and the Spirit of Prophecy

Before we analyze a passage from the Great Controversy, where it is spoken in more detail about the judgment after the thousand years, I would like to note that the writings of the Spirit of prophecy are also in a divine pattern relationship with the Bible. It was not by chance that they were called the lesser light, because like the Moon they also reflect the light of the source (the Sun/the Bible):

Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a **lesser light to lead** men and women **to the greater light**. *RH January 20, 1903, Art. B, par. 9*

And God made two great lights; **the greater light** to rule the day, and **the lesser light** to rule the night: he made the stars also. *Gen 1:16*

The Moon reflects the light of the Sun and makes its light accessible during a dark night. When we realize this relationship we will know that the light from the Spirit of prophecy is not the source but rather a channel of the light of the Bible. This channel was given to make the light of the Bible more available for people living during the dark night of the time of the end of human history. Since we are in the shadow of the dark ages, the spiritual perception of the world is still as dark as midnight through consuming the wine of Babylon – therefore God gave us The Spirit of Prophecy to give us clarity which is necessary because of the dullness of our minds.

Since the case is such, that whenever the Word of God presents God's judgments over the wicked in a way that allows for the natural man to see God as a murderer, the Spirit of prophecy will only make that process even more tangible. It will magnify whatever perception we currently hold of God. The purpose of that is: to expose our sinful imagination concerning our Father and to lead us to repentance. Let us keep this in mind while we read about the judgment after the thousand years as it is represented in the last chapter of the book Great Controversy.

At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in **terrific majesty** He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea. What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death. *GC 662.1*

The focus is Christ's majesty – the glory which emanates His Father's character:

For the Son of man shall come **in the glory of his Father** with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. *Matt 16:27*

We note that this is also the focus in the passages that follow:

Every eye in that vast multitude is **turned to behold the glory of the Son of God**. With one voice the wicked hosts exclaim: “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!” It is not love to Jesus that inspires this utterance. **The force of truth urges the words from unwilling lips**. As the wicked went into their graves, so they come forth with the same enmity to Christ and the same spirit of rebellion. They are to have no new probation in which to remedy the defects of their past lives. **Nothing would be gained by this**. A lifetime of transgression has not softened their hearts. **A second probation, were it given them, would be occupied as was the first in evading the requirements of God and exciting rebellion against Him**. *GC 662.2*

In the beginning the wicked see only the **outward expression** of this glory, and this makes them acknowledge the righteousness of God in the same way the children of Israel acknowledged the glory of God at Mt Sinai.. This glory wrest from their lips words, which they would never utter at other circumstances. This is not repentance though. Mercy ceased to plead for them not because God cannot or is not willing to forgive them, but because they constantly prefer their sins instead of God until they become unable to experience genuine repentance.

In the next 5 paragraphs from the *Great Controversy* (not quoted here) it is spoken about how Satan suggests to the resurrected wicked host from all of human history that he was the one that had resurrected them. He persuades them to invade the golden city – the New Jerusalem, where the redeemed are, and inspires them with his own spirit of hatred toward Christ. The countless soldiers of that army prepare themselves to conquer the city, ignoring the open gates. Their behavior gives full evidence that they would never repent. Then Christ commands for the gates of the city to be closed, and then again His glory dawns with power:

Now Christ **again appears to the view of His enemies**. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is **a throne, high and lifted up**. Upon

this throne sits **the Son of God**, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. **The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance.** *GC 665.1*

The next several paragraphs describe the righteous' joyful condition, and then we read:

In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven **the final coronation of the Son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government and executes justice upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people. Says the prophet of God: "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."** Revelation 20:11, 12. *GC 666.1*

*We see that the judgment over the wicked is pronounced in the context of the final coronation of the Son of God, who is now clothed in His Father's supreme majesty and might. It is also important that the vision does not continue with the description in Rev 20:7-9, where the fire is spoken of, but it continues with the verses immediately after that which describes the great and high throne. The Spirit of Prophecy indicates in this way what will be the **source** of the judgment, i.e. the glorious manifestation of God's character of selfless love. As Ellen White says in another place:*

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. *FLB 176.9*

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

The manifestation of God's holy and merciful character reveals the real nature of sin and exposes fully its destroying characteristic:

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (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.** Rom 12:19, 20

How do we read this sentence? Does God here teach us not to do evil to our enemies because by doing it we take away his opportunity to do it? If something we do is evil, and God does exactly the same thing, does the evil thing suddenly become good? Such a reading reflects rather our own human thinking. "God's ways our higher than our ways." Isaiah 55:8-9. Will God's vengeance and His wrath manifest in a way which is different from the council that has been given to us to follow in similar situations; to do good to those who treat us badly? If this was so, then God requires from us things which He Himself does not do. We must control our anger, but God is allowed to release His anger when he pleases. However Jesus tells us that God requires from us to treat with love those who hate us, because **in this way we show that we are God's children and reflect God's own character in such situations:**

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. (43) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. (44) But I say unto you, **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;** (45) **That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.** (46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? (47) And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? (48) **Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.** Matthew 5:42-48

The perfection of our heavenly Father goes far beyond the practice of loving

only those who treat you well. Luke expresses this perfection as follows:

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. **36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.** *Luke 6:35, 36*

In His requirement to treat our enemies well, our Father in heaven simply wishes us to follow His example. So, carefully setting aside our carnal views of God, let us again see what is the “coals of fire” that comes down over the wicked:

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (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.** *Romans 12:19, 20*

The fire that we heap on the head of one who has enmity against us and unto whom we show kindness and love is not a physical fire. It is a fire which is kindled from the consciousness of the terrible nature of sin in the context of God’s love and kindness. When we are loving to our enemies, we heap the fire of the Holy Spirit upon him to convict him of his wrong course. Jesus speaks about this fire in the following way:

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? *Luke 12:49*

The Closing Description in Great Controversy

Jesus lived a life of perfect sacrifice and selflessness, giving us a picture of how the law is to be written on our hearts and leaving us without excuse for our own sinful selfishness. Through the manifestation of the truth about His Father’s loving character while on the earth, Jesus really kindled a fire – a spiritual fire which burns through all the self-deceptions of man that he creates to live a life of depravity without feeling guilty. This fire would either consume sin from the hearts of the people who repent, or would consume them in the last day when they see the gracious face of the One who has always worked for their salvation yet they have rejected Him. Let us see how this is represented in further paragraphs from the Great Controversy:

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.** The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—**all appear as if written in letters of fire.**

Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a panoramic view appear the scenes of Adam's temptation and fall, and the successive steps in the great plan of redemption. The Saviour's lowly birth; His early life of simplicity and obedience; His baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; His public ministry, unfolding to men heaven's most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plottings of envy, hate, and malice which repaid His benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; His betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob; the fearful events of that night of horror—the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by His best-loved disciples, rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before Annas, arraigned in the high priest's palace, in the judgment hall of Pilate, before the cowardly and cruel Herod, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die—all are vividly portrayed.

And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes—the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up His life.

The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of

their own work. Each actor recalls the part which he performed. Herod, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base Herodias, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving Pilate; the mocking soldiers; the priests and rulers and the maddened throng who cried, “His blood be on us, and on our children!”—**all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Saviour’s feet, exclaiming: “He died for me!”** GC 666.2-667.2

For the redeemed, the manifestation of God’s agape character is a fragrance of life, but for the rest these scenes are consuming fire which will torment their souls just as deep as they have allowed sin to penetrate them, and just as closely as they had known this glory yet chose to turn their backs on it. This portion of the book *Great Controversy* is given in great detail because here is shown the **source of the suffering of the wicked**. When God spoke about the fall of Lucifer, He showed where this spiritual fire comes from.

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.** *Ezekiel 28:18*

In the beginning this fire was kindled in Lucifer’s heart through his iniquity, but after the millennium the presence of the One who is love and light will manifest it completely:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for **love** is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, **which hath a most vehement flame.** (7) **Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it:** if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. *Song of Songs 8:6-7*

The fiery love that comes from our Father’s presence will bring out all the wicked lusts of Satan and this fire will turn him to ashes, as well as all the others who have grafted themselves in him through sin. This point is also confirmed through the symbol of the “scapegoat”:

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, **putting them upon the head of the goat**, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: 22 And **the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited**: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. *Leviticus 16:21-22*

This goat symbolizes Satan who during the thousand years will be left out on desolated earth, kept as a prisoner and expecting his sentence (Isaiah 24:22; Rev 20:1-3). We note that no one should kill this goat, but rather he is left to face the consequences of sin upon himself. When the High priest places his hand on the head or mind of the goat that represents Satan, this reflects the process of calling to remembrance all the sins that Satan has committed. This process is explained in details in the article *The Scapegoat and our Father's Merciful Character*. At last, God's presence will bring out that terrible fire from within the fallen cherub, and the blaze will consume him and those who attached themselves to him turning them into ashes. We remember the source of the fire comes from the midst of Satan and not the midst of God. The description that follows is not redundantly detailed, because it shows how exactly this spiritual fire operates:

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and **the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them.**

It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life, but slavery, ruin, and death. The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. **"All this," cries the lost soul, "I might have had;** but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor for wretchedness, infamy, and despair." All see that their exclusion from heaven is just. By their lives they have declared: "We will not have this Man [Jesus] to reign over us."

As if entranced, **the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. They see in His hands the tables of the**

divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed. They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, “Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:3); and, falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life.

Satan seems paralyzed as he beholds the glory and majesty of Christ. He who was once a covering cherub remembers [hand placed upon the goat] whence he has fallen. A shining seraph, “son of the morning;” how changed, how degraded! From the council where once he was honored, he is forever excluded. He sees another now standing near to the Father, veiling His glory. He has seen the crown placed upon the head of Christ by an angel of lofty stature and majestic presence, and he knows that the exalted position of this angel might have been his.

Memory recalls [hand placed upon the goat] the home of his innocence and purity, the peace and content that were his until he indulged in murmuring against God, and envy of Christ. His accusations, his rebellion, his deceptions to gain the sympathy and support of the angels, his stubborn persistence in making no effort for self-recovery when God would have granted him forgiveness—**all come vividly before him.** He reviews his work among men and its results—the enmity of man toward his fellow man, the terrible destruction of life, the rise and fall of kingdoms, the overturning of thrones, the long succession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions. He recalls his constant efforts to oppose the work of Christ and to sink man lower and lower. **He sees that his hellish plots have been powerless to destroy those who have put their trust in Jesus. As Satan looks upon his kingdom, the fruit of his toil, he sees only failure and ruin. He has led the multitudes to believe that the City of God would be an easy prey; but he knows that this is false. Again and again, in the progress of the great controversy, he has been defeated and compelled to yield. He knows too well the power and majesty of the Eternal.**

The aim of the great rebel has ever been to justify himself and to prove the divine government responsible for the rebellion. To this

end he has bent all the power of his giant intellect. He has worked deliberately and systematically, and with marvelous success, leading vast multitudes to accept his version of the great controversy which has been so long in progress. For thousands of years this chief of conspiracy **has palmed off falsehood for truth**. But the time has now come when the rebellion is to be finally defeated and the history and character of Satan disclosed. In his last great effort to dethrone Christ, destroy His people, and take possession of the City of God, the **archdeceiver has been fully unmasked**. Those who have united with him see the total failure of his cause. Christ's followers and the loyal angels behold the full extent of his machinations against the government of God. **He is the object of universal abhorrence**.

Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; **the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture**. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.

“Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.” Verse 4. Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. **The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences**. The working out of Satan's rule **in contrast** with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. **It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created**. “All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee.” Psalm 145:10. The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. **With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole**

universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare:

“Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.”

Before the universe has been clearly presented the great sacrifice made by the Father and the Son in man’s behalf. The hour has come when Christ occupies His rightful position and is glorified above principalities and powers and every name that is named. It was for the joy that was set before Him—that He might bring many sons unto glory—that He endured the cross and despised the shame. And inconceivably great as was the sorrow and the shame, yet greater is the joy and the glory. He looks upon the redeemed, renewed in His own image, every heart bearing the perfect impress of the divine, every face reflecting the likeness of their King. He beholds in them the result of the travail of His soul, and He is satisfied. Then, in a voice that reaches the assembled multitudes of the righteous and the wicked, He declares: “Behold the purchase of My blood! For these I suffered, for these I died, that they might dwell in My presence throughout eternal ages.” And the song of praise ascends from the white-robed ones about the throne: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Revelation 5:12. *GC 668.2-671.1*

In the light of this all-exposing love, the wicked set themselves against Satan as they see that he was not their benefactor but rather had led them all along to share in his destruction. It is exactly here where the spiritual fire becomes manifested as a physical fire. Let us note carefully what happens:

Notwithstanding that Satan has been constrained to acknowledge God’s justice and to bow to the supremacy of Christ, his character remains unchanged. The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, again bursts forth. Filled with frenzy, he determines not to yield the great controversy. The time has come for a last desperate struggle against the King of heaven. He rushes into the midst of his subjects and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury and arouse them to instant battle. **But of all the countless millions whom he has allured into rebellion, there are none now to acknowledge his supremacy. His power is at an end.** The wicked are filled with the same hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they cannot prevail against Jehovah. **Their rage is kindled** [here is the source of the

fire – it comes from the midst of the soul itself] **against Satan and those who have been his agents in deception, and with the fury of demons they turn upon them.**

Saith the Lord: “Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: **and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit.**” “I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.... I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.” Ezekiel 28:6-8, 16-19.

“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 earth itself vomits out its inhabitants] **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. ... The full penalty of the law has been visited;** the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah. *GC 671.2-673.1*

Destroyed Without Labour or External Force

We note that the full penalty of the law has been visited, which is very similar to Jesus' expression that He would not be the One to judge at the end, but the Word which He had spoken (John 12:47, 48). God does not use lethal power in His judgments. This truth is confirmed also through one of the books of the Apocrypha, which pioneers of Adventism considered worthy and important for the time of the end:

And this my Son shall rebuke the wicked inventions of those nations, **which for their wicked life are fallen into the tempest; 38 And shall lay before them their evil thoughts, and the torments wherewith they shall begin to be tormented, which are like unto a flame: and he shall destroy them without labour by the law which is like unto me.** *2 Esdras 13:37-38*

Here is confirmed the idea that the wicked will be punished through the reflecting function of the law. This Apocrypha was studied and quoted by James White, Joseph Bates and E.J. Waggoner. *Word to the Little Flock*, an early book by Ellen White, contains seven references to 2nd Esdras. Here is one:

We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads. [2 Esdras 2:43.]
WLF 14.3

Let us look at this verse in the context of chapter two of 2 Esdras to see what is spoken there:

And in the midst of them **there was a young man of a high stature, taller than all the rest, and upon every one of their heads he set crowns, and was more exalted;** which I marvelled at greatly. (44) So I asked the angel, and said, Sir, what are these? (45) He answered and said unto me, These be they that have put off the mortal clothing, and put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God: now are they crowned, and receive palms. (46) Then said I unto the angel, **What young person is it that crowneth them, and giveth them palms in their hands?** (47) So he answered and said unto me, **It is the Son of God, whom they have confessed in the world.** Then

began I greatly to commend them that stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord. *2 Esdras 2:43-47*

As in the vision which God gave to Ellen White, the person in question which places crowns on the heads of the saved is the Son of God. Concerning the significance of the Apocrypha for the believers living in the last days, she said:

All, all who keep the commandments of God, will enter in through the gates into the city and have right to the tree of life and ever be in the presence of that lovely Jesus whose countenance shines brighter than the sun at noon day. I then saw the word of God pure and unadulterated, and that we must answer for *the way we received the truth proclaimed from that word*. I saw that it had been a hammer to break the flinty heart in pieces, and **a fire to consume the dross and tin**, that the heart might be pure and holy. I saw that the **Apocrypha was the hidden book, and that the wise of these last days should understand it**. I saw that the Bible was the standard book, that will judge us at the last day. I saw that heaven would be cheap enough, and that nothing was too dear to sacrifice for Jesus, and that we must give all to enter the kingdom. - Manuscript 4, 1850.

The Glorious Character of God

The Spirit of prophecy confirms the idea that the way we read the Scriptures is crucial for the way we will be judged, because the Word of God is like a hammer to break the flinty heart in pieces, and a *fire* to consume the dross and tin. The Law of God is fiery, because it is a transcript of His character:

In setting aside the law of God, men know not what they are doing. **God's law is the transcript of His character**. It embodies the principles of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow. *COL 305.3*

For our God is a consuming fire. *Hebrew 12:29*

As we have seen, this fire comes from *the very substance of God*, which is pure and lofty love:

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. *1 John 4:8*

Notice that it does not say that God is loving, or, that God has love, but it says, He **is** love. Therefore when the name of God was presented, which is His character, mercy stands always on the top of the list:

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise **lovingkindness**, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. *Jeremiah 9:23, 24*

And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. (6) And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness** and truth, (7) **Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. *Exodus 34:5-7*

As love is the very substance of God, it means that all of His other qualities are only love's manifestation, or channels for that love:

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy.... *DA 762.3*

This means that everything God does is moved by love. The justice of our Father is not one that is severe and deprived of mercy. Satan is the one who wants to present God as if with Him mercy and justice are incompatible:

The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a **theory of justice inconsistent with mercy**. He claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God, claims that his decisions are justice, are pure and without fault. Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat and declares that his counsels are infallible. **Here his merciless justice comes in, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God.** *Christ Triumphant 11.4*

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that **justice was**

inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, **it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice...** God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. *DA 761.4*

In contrast with that, God always acts in love to His children. This love Scripture represents as a fire:

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for **love** is strong as death, **jealousy** is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are **flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.** *Song of Songs 8:6, 7 ESV*

How is it possible for love to be fierce? Our heavenly Father's love mercilessly reveals the true nature of sin – its destroying quality. This is the flame which will torment the wicked:

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: Revelation 14:10

The Greek word used here for brimstone has the following definitions:

Θειον: (theion, related to theios – dealing with divinity)
Strong's definition: 1. Brimstone a. **divine incense**.....

To the pioneers of Adventism it was revealed, that this fire could not burn the wicked for the whole of eternity, because that would have been in contradiction to God's just character. Today we are invited to walk out the next step in the narrow path of this truth concerning the character of God, to see that our heavenly Father is not the source of this suffering, but that His loving presence reveals sin in its destroying nature, and this process accomplishes the judgment. We have seen that as a transcript of His character, the law is also a fiery law of love:

And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a **fiery law** for them. (3) **Yea, he loved the people**; all his saints are in thy

hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. *Deut 33:2, 3*

Therefore in the analysis of the last chapter of the Great Controversy we have read that:

The full penalty of the law has been visited; GC 673.1

The fiery law of God is an expression of His love; it has the power to manifest sin's true character, and this process releases sin's destroying power. On the other hand, in its state as a mirror, the law reflects people's sinful thoughts that see God as One who could not forgive:

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. Satan strives constantly to lead men into sin, and he who is willing to be led, who refuses to forsake his sins, and despises forgiveness and grace, will suffer the result of his course. *ST, April 14, 1898 par. 13*

Fire from God?

The worm that does not die, the chains of darkness and the fire that is not quenched are all symbols which represent the experience of all who permitted themselves to be grafted into the stock of Satan. This state of the sinner places him beyond opportunity to exercise genuine repentance for his sins and hence beyond the chance to take advantage of our Father's forgiveness. Here is how hardening is the effect of sin. Of course, there will also be a physical fire, which is to cleanse the earth preparing it for its renewed state. We can think of the parallel of healthy forest fires that give new life to the forest. Since God does not use mortal power, then where does the physical fire come from? In a number of translations the phrase "from God" is placed in brackets, and in some it is even absent:

And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city: and fire came down [from God] out of the heaven and devoured them. *Rev 20:9 DARBY*

And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. *Rev 20:9 ASV*

They came up across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the saints, the beloved city. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed them. *Rev 20:9 CSB*

They came up across the whole earth and surrounded the saints' camp, the city that God loves. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. *Rev 20:9 CEB*

And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, *Rev 20:9 ESV*

These are only some of the translations in English which render the verse in this way. Did the translators, when rendering the passage with the phrase “from God”, also translate the sinful thinking of man concerning God? Man in his fallen nature will always worship the power of God over His character, because man himself desires God’s power more than His character, especially because that character is one of self-sacrifice. Thus he will translate verses in a manner that emphasize the power he wants God to have, rather than the character that he values less. This makes us Old Covenant hearers of the law rather than doers (James 1:23), making God work according to our own plans rather than knowing and thereby trusting Him. The reflection of that Old Covenant thinking by the Law of God indeed makes the glory of God’s character appear as a consuming fire:

Exodus 24:17 And the sight of the glory of the Lord was **like devouring fire** on the top of the mount **in the eyes of the children of Israel.**

Satan has always wanted for people to believe that since fire comes down from heaven, then it means that God had caused it DIRECTLY. Yet in these cases it was Satan who brought down this fire from heaven:

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. *Job 1:16*

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. (13) And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, *Rev 13:12, 13*

However Jesus rebuked this thinking when it appeared even with His disciples:

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, **even as Elias did?** (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are** of. *Luke 9:54, 55*

Here Jesus alludes to the fact that not only His disciples but Elijah himself had problems with understanding God's character, and thought that God would have to destroy their mutual enemies with fire. Similar temptations also beset the one who came in the power and the spirit of Elijah:

Like the Saviour's disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom. He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. **He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal Himself as a God that answereth by fire.** *DA 215.2*

Yet God and His Son were patient with their prophets, teaching them the

nature of Their holy character and the principles of Their kingdom:

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: 12 And after the earthquake **a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.** 1 Kings 19:11-12

The Lord was not in the physical fire because His power is always submitted to His loving character, and therefore His kingdom is not a kingdom of force and compelling power:

The Saviour gathered His disciples about Him, and said to them, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." There was in these words a solemnity and impressiveness which the disciples were far from comprehending. That which Christ discerned they could not see. **They did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom,** and this ignorance was the apparent cause of their contention. But the real cause lay deeper. **By explaining the nature of the kingdom, Christ might for the time have quelled their strife; but this would not have touched the underlying cause.** Even after they had received the fullest knowledge, any question of precedence might have renewed the trouble. Thus disaster would have been brought to the church after Christ's departure. **The strife for the highest place was the outworking of that same spirit which was the beginning of the great controversy in the worlds above, and which had brought Christ from heaven to die.** There rose up before Him a vision of Lucifer, the "son of the morning," in glory surpassing all the angels that surround the throne, and united in closest ties to the Son of God. Lucifer had said, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:12, 14); and the desire for self-exaltation had brought strife into the heavenly courts, and had banished a multitude of the hosts of God. Had Lucifer really desired to be like the Most High, he would never have deserted his appointed place in heaven; **for the spirit of the Most High is manifested in unselfish ministry. Lucifer desired God's power, but not His character.** He sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by

his spirit will do the same. Thus alienation, discord, and strife will be inevitable. Dominion becomes the prize of the strongest. **The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force**; every individual regards every other as an obstacle in the way of his own advancement, or a steppingstone on which he himself may climb to a higher place. *DA 435.2*

Then why did Elijah call down fire from heaven to destroy those who had been sent by the king to capture him? And where did this fire come from if it was not from God?

And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, **If** I be a man of God, then let fire **come down from heaven**, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. *2 Kings 1:10*

This is the case that the disciples referred to. Here Elijah has not yet shaken off his erroneous views concerning the kingdom of God, and he succumbed to the temptation to defend his identity as the prophet of God through signs from heaven and violence. With similar temptations Satan also came to Jesus:

And when the tempter came to him, he said, **If** thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. *Matt 4:3*

And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. **If** thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. *Matt 27:40*

For more detailed study on the story of Elijah, read the booklet *The Ministration of Death*. With all this in mind what then will be the cause of the physical fire falling down from heaven and erupting from the earth after the thousand years? When we looked at the factor of God's Word and the environment, we have seen that the laws which were implemented by God into nature had been designed to mirror the character of man in his state of bliss and obedience to God. Yet when in the place of Christ's Spirit was instilled the spirit of rebellion, the spirit of Satan, the earth commenced manifesting it. The Flood was a culmination for that age, when a whole generation crucified Christ in themselves, using His power for their base and selfish designs. When they completely rejected His Spirit, which contains everything ("by Him all things consist", Col 1:17; and "in whom we live, and move, and have our being", Acts 17:28) the earth was allowed to fully reveal the spirit of its master – fallen man. We are informed that the same principle will operate in the end,

where the flaming lusts of men fill the earth and break out as physical fire:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, **burned in their lust** one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. *Romans 1:27*

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, **walking after their own lusts**, (4) And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (5) **For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: (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. 2 Peter 3:3-7**

We could wonder about the antediluvians and why they did not believe this principle. Yet the situation today is not different. When all the wicked from the whole of history of mankind cover the surface of the earth and together with Satan manifest completely their rebellion, the earth and heaven will be once again allowed to reflect the burning nature of their wickedness. This is why in this passage from the last chapter in the Great Controversy we read the following concerning the earth and the whole creation:

Satan's work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years **he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe** and causing grief throughout the universe. **The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God's creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations. "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they [the righteous] break forth into singing."** Isaiah 14:7. And a shout of praise and triumph ascends from the whole loyal universe. "The voice of a great multitude," "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings," is heard, saying: "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Revelation 19:6. *GC 673.2*

At last earth and heaven, having spewed out the stored up wickedness in the form of fire, will rest in peace. Then again and forever more nature will be

enabled to reflect the dweller's beauty of holiness – the children of God within whose souls and hearts rejoices Christ's Spirit of obedience and loving gratitude towards His Father. Accepting Christ's character they had been enabled to live forever in the presence of the fiery love of our wonderful God and His Son.

(26) And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? (27) **He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living:** ye therefore do greatly err.

Jesus connects the Burning Bush to God being a God of the living. That is the symbolism of the bush being burned with fire, yet not being consumed:

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in **a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush**: and he looked, and, behold, **the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed**. (3) And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, **why the bush is not burnt**. (4) And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, **God called unto him out of the midst of the bush**, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. (5) And he said, Draw not nigh hither: **put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground**. (6) Moreover he said, **I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.**
Exodus 3:2-6

Both sinners and righteous will be in the presence of that fiery love, but it is up to us how we react to it. The righteous can “dwell with the devouring fire”; but the thoughts, words, and actions of a sinful life, finally uncovered on meeting an exalted God, will be turned in on itself upon the man who judges God unmerciful – and the sinner's “breath, as fire, shall devour” him.

(10) Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. (11) **Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.** (12) And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. (13) Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my

might. (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; (16) He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. (17) Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. *Isaiah 33:14-17*

While the earth was wrapped in the fire of destruction, **the righteous abode safely in the Holy City. Upon those that had part in the first resurrection, the second death has no power. 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 673.3

Like the three young Hebrew men who stood in the fire of Babylon unburned, the holy inhabitants of the heavenly city are not affected by the spirit of fury that bursts forth from the wicked. They are filled with the Spirit of the Prince of peace and therefore all nature is at peace with them. God is a shield to them in the sense that they are filled with His Spirit because He will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee (Isa 26:3).

Degrees of Punishment

What about the idea that the amount the wicked suffer is in proportion to their sinfulness? Jesus spoke the following:

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. (48) But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. *Luke 12:47-48*

As an expansion to this, the Spirit of Prophecy states:

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. **The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.** {GC 673.1}

We remember that the Bible says that the law is spiritual (Romans 7:12). As the wicked are judged according to the law, their suffering is firstly spiritual as we have indicated previously. The more knowledge that a person had of Christ and His will, the greater his suffering will be. When a person attends a funeral of a person they don't know that well, the suffering is not that great; but when you have an intimate knowledge of a person the suffering is great. No one has known God and His Son more than Satan. He walked up and down on God's holy stones of fire (Eze 28:14) – the symbol of His character which is the law. This is why his suffering is the greatest; this is why he is made to suffer longer than anyone else. The Bible does not say who makes Satan to suffer longer, that is left for the reader to decide who makes Satan suffer.

We know from how Jesus conducts judgement that the sinner himself brings sentence upon himself.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. *John 8:9*

The story of Haman also shows us why Satan must suffer as long as he does.

And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had

made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. *Est 7:9*

Haman and Mordecai represent Satan and Christ. The punishment that Satan desired for Christ, he himself will suffer. For we read:

Judge not, that ye be not judged. (2) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. *Matt 7:1,2*

Satan will be judged by his own idea of justice. It was his plea that every sin should meet its punishment. If God remitted the punishment, he said, He was not a God of truth or justice. Satan will meet the judgment which he said God should exercise. {12MR 413.1}

Every person will experience the justice they thought God should exercise on others. The more hatred and vindictiveness they have manifested to others the more this will be reflected back to them in the mirror of God's law of love that causes them to see the full depravity of their natures. Those who desire others to rot in hell will most certainly end up rotting in hell with exactly the same intensity that they demanded for others. Therefore forgive and you will be forgiven. Release every man the debt that he owes you. Settle yourself in your mind with your adversary and make peace with them in your heart lest you be delivered to the same judge that judged others and condemned them – yourself.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. (26) Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. *Matt 5:25-26*

Satan has condemned and accused more than any other person and thus he will suffer the longest as a result.

Conclusion

In this booklet it is clearly proved that:

Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. Psa 34:21

It is the evil within the heart of the sinner that will come forth and destroy him. This fire is created through the guilt generated in the heart of the sinner in the presence of God.

In summary we are reminded of some simple facts.

1. The way to righteousness is narrow and the majority of the world will reject the loving grace of God. Jesus said the way to eternal life is strait and narrow and few there be that find it. Matthew 7:14.
2. The wicked will die and be lost forever, crushed in agony by the guilt of their own rebellion.
3. It is through the laws of nature that have the capacity to reflect the sinfulness of man that the wicked will be consumed, while at the same time feeling overwhelmed and abandoned under the weight of their shameful life.
4. There is no act of aggression or force or desire to end the life of the wicked on the part of God. The wicked are snared in the work of their own hands; they fall into the pit that they have dug. (Psalm 7:15; Psalm 9:16)

End of the Wicked

Final Fiery Judgment

For those who believe in God it is almost universally reasoned that the only way to end sin is to stop the wicked dead in their tracks by bringing down a fiery stream of fury from the heart of God to burn up the wicked and bring them to an end.

It is often thought that the wicked are not simply going to destroy themselves and that if God is a God of justice He will punish transgressors and reward them for their evil according to their deeds by directly putting them into flames and burning them alive Himself.

Would a loving God do this to His children? Would you burn your wayward children alive in flames and watch them scream in agony?

Some people say that the only way to eradicate a cancer is to cut it out. The problem with this analogy is that you cut cancer out of a single person, the object is to save life not to destroy it. Some people say the wicked are like a dog with Rabies and the dog needs to be put to sleep. Do you then take the dog and slowly burn it on a fire for several days while it screams and howls in agony while the righteous cry – just a little more because you deserve it because of your wickedness? Is this really what is going to take place at the end?

“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

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Isa 53:4