



PROPHECY SEMINAR



THE FINAL PHASE OF THE JUDGMENT



Daniel has unveiled to us three phases of the judgment: the judgment of the righteous (pre-advent judgment) (see Lessons 13-15), the judgment of the wicked during the 1000 years (see Lesson 16), and the execution of the judgment at the end of the 1000 years. In this lesson, we want to study carefully the third phase – the execution of the judgment.

The final phase of the judgment is the meting-out of punishment to the wicked. According to popular teaching today, a wicked person goes to hell as soon as he dies, yet Daniel and Revelation have clearly revealed to us that the wicked are not judged until the 1000 years, and that they are punished at the end of the 1000 years. How could this be true if a lost person goes to hell when he dies?

This lesson is very closely related to the previous one and will examine three questions: When does hell take place? Where does it take place? and How long does the punishment last?

DANIEL AND THE FATE OF THE WICKED

1. **To what does Daniel say that the wicked will be resurrected? Daniel 12:2 (871)[871].**

"To _____ and everlasting _____."

2. **What is the final fate of the little horn? Daniel 7:26 (865) [865].**

"They shall take away his dominion, to _____ and _____ it forever."

NOTE: The little horn is symbolic of all the wicked, who, according to Daniel, will eventually be consumed and destroyed.

WHEN WILL THE WICKED BE PUNISHED?

According to popular teaching, a wicked person goes to hell as soon as he dies. Therefore, punishment is received immediately after death. If this were true, how unfair God would be. Cain slew Abel six thousand years ago. According to popular teaching, Cain would have gone to hell when he died and would have been burning ever since. Someone else commits murder today and goes to hell at death, but poor Cain has to burn six thousand years longer for the crime of being born six thousand years earlier! Is that justice? Every sense of justice suggests that people be punished alike for the same crime.

3. **According to the apostle Peter, when are the wicked punished? 2 Peter 2:9 (1166) [1204].**

"To reserve the unjust under punishment for the _____ of _____."

NOTE: If the wicked are reserved for the final day of judgment, they cannot be burning now.

- 4. When did Jesus say that the wicked will be burned in the fire? Matthew 13:40-42 (948) [958].**

"So it will be at the _____ of this age."

NOTE: Jesus makes it clear that the wicked are not placed in the fire until the end of the world.

- 5. When does John the Revelator say that the wicked will be cast into the fire? Revelation 20:7, 9,15 (1188,1189) [1229].**

At the end of the _____ years.

NOTE: The Bible is very clear on the question of when the wicked will be punished. They are not cast into the fire until the end of the 1000 years.

WHERE ARE THE WICKED PUNISHED?

Popular teaching today suggests that hell is going on in the center of the earth. The devil stands there with his pitchfork, poking people into the fire continually. Obviously, this is a fictitious, medieval concept that has no place in modern thinking and no place in Biblical teaching.

- 6. Where does the Bible say that the fires of hell will take place? Revelation 20:9 (1188) [1229].**

"They went up on the breadth of the _____
... and fire came down from God out of heaven and
_____ them."

NOTE: As the wicked encircle the Holy City, fire comes down and destroys them. They are not inside the earth somewhere; they are right on the earth.

- 7. How does the apostle Peter describe the fires of hell? 2 Peter 3:7-12 (1167) [1205].**

a. "The heavens and the _____ which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for _____ until the day of judgment."

b. "The _____ will melt with fervent heat."

c. "both the earth and the works that are in it will be _____ up."

NOTE: Peter's picture of the fires of hell is very clear. The entire world is engulfed in flames that totally destroy the surface of the earth. The world was destroyed in Noah's day by a flood of water. It will be destroyed the second time by a flood of fire that will totally annihilate the wicked.

8. When the fire is all over, what does God create? Revelation 21:1 (1189) [1229].

"A new _____ and a new _____."

NOTE: The heavens in this text refer to the atmospheric heavens not the heaven where God dwells (2 Peter 3:7) (1167) [1205]. The present surface of the earth as we know it will be totally destroyed. Then it will be returned to its original perfection by recreation. It will then become the final home of God's redeemed people throughout all eternity.

HOW LONG ARE THE WICKED PUNISHED?

Popular teaching suggests that, when people go to hell, they continue burning throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. In other words, they never, never stop burning. Notice one preacher's description of what hell is like:

"In the kingdom to come there is a large and broad valley where the multitudes of lost souls are suffering all the torments of the damned. Spanning the valley is a high bridge which gives a good view of the whole terrain. One of the joys of the saints is to go out on this bridge on the Sabbath day and view these poor souls. They see friends, relatives, . . . father, mother, brother, sister, husband, or wife in torment. This view is a feast for the eyes."

"See! It is a pitiful sight. The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven. You can see on the face of this little child what you see on the faces of all in hell – despair, desperate and horrible! . . . God was very good to this child. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in hell. So God, in His mercy, called it out of the world in its early childhood." Quoted in "What Hell Will Be Like", Ruben Engstrom, Southern Publishing Association, p.4.

What a picture of God! No wonder many people view God as a tyrant when they think of God punishing people without end throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. There have been monstrous tyrants throughout history. They would torture people endlessly but at long last, they at least allowed their victims to finally die. However, some would have us believe that God is a worse tyrant than human tyrants. The teaching is, that by some miraculous process, God keeps renewing people, keeping them alive so that He can keep on torturing them without end. No wonder the doctrine of an eternally burning hell has made more infidels than any other doctrine the devil has ever devised.

The destruction of the wicked is a frequently mentioned subject in Scripture. In fact, it is referred to 182 times as complete annihilation: 98 in the Old Testament and 84 in the New Testament. One hundred and eighty-two times, Scripture declares that hell will end and that the

wicked will never be any more. There are also five or six other texts that are not as clear, but as we look at them more carefully, we will discover them to be in harmony with the rest of Scripture. Proponents of the teaching that hell will never come to an end have latched on to these five or six texts, completely ignoring the 182 clear texts of Scripture indicating the final, total, complete annihilation of the wicked. (For an explanation of these five or six texts that are in harmony with the 182 clear texts of scripture, please see the Exhibit 1.)

9. What does Jesus say will be the ultimate fate of the wicked? John 3:16 (1027) [1046].

"That whoever believes in Him should not _____
but have everlasting life."

NOTE: A stronger word cannot be found to describe the cessation of life than the word "perish".

10. How does the psalmist, David, describe the fate of the wicked? Psalm 37:9, 10 (534) [556].

- a. "Evildoers shall be cut _____."
- b. "The wicked shall be _____."
- c. "You will look carefully for his _____, but it shall be no more."

11. How else does David describe the fate of the wicked? Psalm 37:20 (534) [556].

- a. "The wicked shall _____."
- b. "The enemies of the Lord, . . . _____."
- c. "Into _____ they shall _____ away."

NOTE: Here again is a picture of total and absolute annihilation.

12. Will the fires of hell burn people up, or will it keep on burning them? Malachi 4:1 (931) [928].

"The day which is coming shall _____ them _____,"
says the LORD of hosts."

13. When the fire has done its work, how much will be left? Malachi 4:1 (931) [928].

"That will leave them neither _____ nor _____."

NOTE: When a tree is burned up, both its branches and its roots, there is nothing left of the tree. It is totally destroyed, totally consumed, totally annihilated.

14. What is the only thing that is left of the wicked after the fire has done its work? Malachi 4:3 (931) [928].

- 15. What two cities in the Bible are mentioned as examples of hell fire? Jude 7 (1173) [1212].**

"_____ and _____."

NOTE: These two cities are no longer burning. The fire burned until it had completely consumed and destroyed the city, then it went out. The Bible states that these two cities are examples of what hell fire is like. When the fire has done its work, it will go out.

THE FATE OF SATAN

- 16. What does Jesus plan to do to Satan? Hebrews 2:14 (1149) [1183].**

"_____ him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

- 17. How does God destroy the devil? Revelation 20:10 (1188) [1229].**

"The devil... was cast into the _____ of _____ and _____." (For an explanation of the rest of this verse, please see Exhibit 1.)

- 18. What is the lake of fire called? Revelation 21:8 (1189) [1230].**

"The second _____."

NOTE: Please note that the fire results in death, a death from which there is no resurrection.

- 19. In Ezekiel 28, under the symbolism of the king of Tyre, God addresses Lucifer, that arch rebel. How does God bring an end to Lucifer? Ezekiel 28:18 (831) [830].**

"Therefore I brought _____ from your midst; it _____ you, and I turned you to _____."

NOTE: Again, notice the strong language used to describe the destruction of Satan. He is destroyed by fire, he is devoured and reduced to ashes. The fate of the wicked is the same fate that awaits Satan himself.

- 20. Will Satan still exist in the fire? Ezekiel 28:19 (831) [830].**

"You... shall be no _____."

NOTE: Praise God! Thank God! Shout praises to Him! We don't have to worry about Satan getting out of hell. God will forever bring an end to Satan. What a glorious truth!

THE END OF SIN

- 21. What are the wages of sin? Romans 6:23 (1089) [1115].**

"For the wages of sin is _____."



NOTE: The penalty for sin is not everlasting life in hell, but death. God does not offer us a choice between life in hell or life in heaven. The choice offered us is life versus death. If a person burned throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity in hell, amazingly he would still receive eternal life. It certainly would not be a pleasant life, but it would still be life, and he would never receive the wages of sin, which is death. Hell fire is not the punishment for sin; death is. The fire is only the means to bring about the end, which is death. If the fire does not result in death, then it is not the punishment of sin.

22. Who only has eternal life? 1 John 5:11,12 (1171) [1209].

"He who has the Son has _____; he who does not have the Son of God does not have _____."

NOTE: Life is available only in Jesus Christ. Only those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour have everlasting life. Without Christ, there can be no life. Satan would like us to think that we can have life without Christ. If eternal hell were true, that would be possible. Scripture is just too clear – there is no life apart from Jesus Christ.

23. On Calvary, Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He suffered the second death for us. Is Jesus still being punished on the cross today, or did He die on the cross? John 19:30, 33 (1048) [1069, 1070].

He _____.

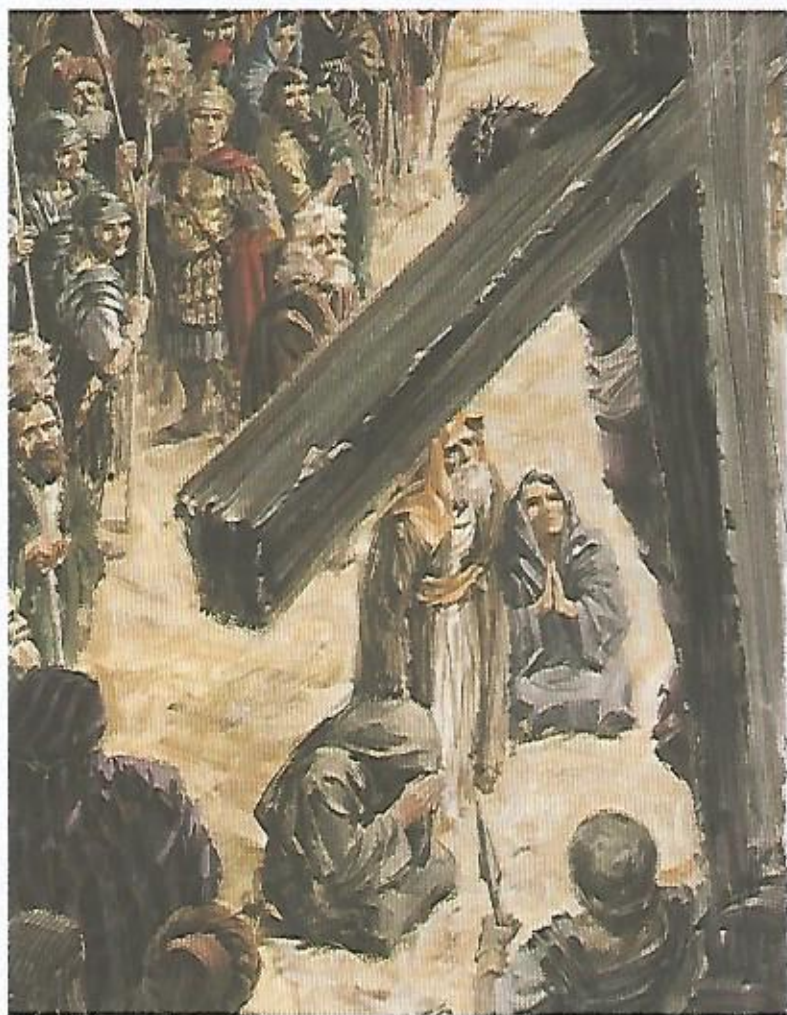
NOTE: The fact that Jesus died on the cross is the strongest evidence against the pagan doctrine of eternal torment. (For the origin of this doctrine, see Exhibit 2.) Our Saviour paid the penalty for our sin. That penalty was death, not burning through all eternity in hell. God will deal with the sin problem. He will totally destroy sin and sinners. They will be no more. God has done the only thing that a just God could do in destroying sinners. But praise God, He is not a pagan tyrant. He is just, but He is also merciful.

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

24. What did God do so that you don't have to perish in hell? John 3:16 (1027) [1046].

He gave His _____.

25. Are you thankful that a merciful and just God will destroy sin and sinners, but that He will not punish them throughout all eternity?



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EXHIBIT 2

For Daniel Lesson 18

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOW THE DOCTRINES OF ETERNAL TORMENT AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL ENTERED THE CHURCH

Some have wondered how the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul (the belief that when a man dies he goes immediately to heaven) and the doctrine of the eternal torment of the wicked (that the fires of hell never go out) ever became a part of the Christian Church, especially in view of all that the Bible teaches concerning the sleep of the dead, and the utter destruction of the wicked. Again, let it be repeated that the testimony of Scripture is clear, convincing, and complete. We now wish to trace the history of how the Christian Church apostatized from the truth on this doctrine.

The doctrine of man's natural immortality had its origin, not as a revelation from God, but in a revelation to man by the old serpent among the beautiful trees of the garden of Eden. There the tempter suggested to Eve: "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4), (4) [3]. Thus, the testimony of Scripture is clear as to who is the originator of this doctrine of man's natural immortality. It is none other than that great Deceiver, the devil himself. This alone ought to make us very cautious about accepting a doctrine originated by the devil.

It can further be traced as it arises out of the Oriental religions of the past, with its pantheism, pre-existence of the soul, and reincarnation. Next, it was revealed in the Egyptian version of the immortality of the soul, and then in the terrible delusion of the Persian dualism (eternal existence of good and evil—neither good nor evil could defeat each other; thus both must always exist). From there it entered into the pagan Greek religions.

It found its greatest period of acceptance and expansion during the fourth century B.C. under the pagan Greek philosopher Plato. During these years the Bible record stood almost alone in presenting man as a candidate for immortality, but not possessing it naturally. Then the Old Testament canon closed with the book of Malachi about 425 B.C. It was during this period between the writing of the Old and New Testament, that Judaism became penetrated by the pagan teaching of the immortality of the soul. During this time two schools of thought developed in Judaism: (1) a group that continued to hold to the Old

Testament picture of man as a candidate for immortality who rested in the grave until the resurrection; and (2) a new group arising around 150 B.C. who introduced the Platonic philosophy of the immortality of the soul into the Jewish church.

Therefore, Judaism stood divided on this issue when Jesus came and reaffirmed the Old Testament teaching that death is a sleep and man will receive immortality at the second coming. This was amplified and expanded by most of the New Testament writers, so that the early Christian Church was brought back to the original teaching of the Old Testament before the writing of the New Testament ceased. Thus we find the early Christian Church for over 150 years holding to the true Biblical picture of death as a sleep and the annihilation of the wicked. Notice the testimony of Justin Martyr who died in A.D. 165 and was one of the leaders of the Christian Church in the early centuries:

"If you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this (truth) (of the resurrection), and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians." Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 80, in **Ante Nicene Fathers**, Vol. 1, p. 294.

So strong was the feeling of the early church that they would not even call a person a Christian who believed that the soul went to heaven at death.

Strange as it may seem, it was shortly after Justin Martyr that the pagan concept of the immortality of the soul was first introduced into the Christian Church. Remember there were two different teachings regarding death:

1. The immortality of the soul—pagan in origin, stemming from Plato, and incorporating elements of Persian dualism to form a doctrine of eternal torment. Again, Persian dualism taught that good and evil were both eternal and could never be destroyed. Hence the evil power must always exist somewhere, and since it could not be found in heaven, the pagans devised a place of torment for all evil, since even God could not destroy it.
2. The Biblical picture of death, as a sleep, and the wicked as eternally destroyed and annihilated.

These two different theories existed side by side through the centuries; one held by the pagans, the second held by those who believed in the one true God. Then, one of the greatest tragedies of Christianity occurred when this pagan concept was introduced into the Christian Church.

It was Athenagoras, about 188 A.D., who became the first Christian Father to use the term "immortal soul." He contended that the soul is immortal and imperishable. Thus, within 25 years of the death of Justin Martyr, who would not even regard a person as a Christian who believed in an immortal soul, we find another church father making the bold pagan suggestion that the soul of man is immortal and cannot die.

A few years later, Tertullian, who died in A.D. 240, further developed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul into a system, adding the dreadful corollary of eternal torment. His argument was that since all souls are immortal, the punishment of the wicked must be eternal. He stressed a sacred fire that never consumes, but renews as it burns, eternally killing, but never terminating. This is simply the old pagan doctrine of Persian dualism, stated now in Christian terminology, but still with the inevitable conclusion that even God cannot put an end to sin and sinners. He must consign them to a place of eternal burning to be punished because they are indestructible. Thus, the God of the Christians became no better than the pagan gods of Greece and Rome. Before this, the uniqueness of Christianity stood on the fact that their God could conquer evil; He could make an utter end; He could do what the pagan gods were unable to do—He could put an utter end to sin and sinners. Now Tertullian had brought Christianity down to a par with paganism—God couldn't conquer evil. He must consign sinners to an eternal hell.

The doctrine of natural immortality and eternal torment was further popularized by Jerome and Augustine. In fact, Augustine added such great prestige to the doctrine that it became the predominant faith of the church for over 1,000 years.

When the Reformation began, some of the Reformers, such as Martin Luther, recognized the origin of the teaching of natural immortality, but through the influence of John Calvin and others, the bulk of the Protestant reformers continued to hold to the pagan teaching of the immortality of the soul and eternal torment of the wicked.

In summation, let us quote from the Methodist-Congregationalist clergyman, Amos Phelps (1805-1874):

"This doctrine [of natural immortality] can be traced through the muddy channels of a corrupted Christianity, a perverted Judaism, and pagan philosophy, and a superstitious idolatry, to the great instigator of mischief in the garden of Eden. The Protestants borrowed it from the Catholics, the Catholics from the Pharisees, the Pharisees from the pagans, and the pagans from the old serpent who first preached the doctrine amid the lowly bowels of Paradise to an audience all too willing to hear and heed the new and fascinating theology: 'Ye shall not surely die.'"

Much of the material here presented has been gleaned from the two volume work: **The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers** by LeRoy E. Froom.

