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**Prophecy Article**

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**The Lake of Fire: Where Is it Located?**

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**The new information in this article may come as a surprise, but it can be shown from the Bible and history that the Lake of Fire is presently in existence on this earth! You could be taken there, see it for yourself, and come away without your hair being singed. Incredible? Not at all! This is one article that all biblical students should read. It is not a “quack theory” given simply to gain attention. It is a serious study with practical information about this intriguing subject.**

The New Testament mentions the existence of a lake which is destined to become the place of judgment for the Beast, the False Prophet, Satan (after the Millennium), and wicked human beings. It is called “The Lake of Fire,” or more accurately, “The Lake of the Fire.” It is “the Fire” which makes the lake unique, and that fire is the fire of judgment! The fuel that feeds the fire in this lake is brimstone (an old name for sulfur).

Is there such a lake on earth today that fits the description of this “Lake of the Fire”? The answer is yes. In fact, this lake has been in existence for at least 4000 years. People have traveled to its region and have reported seeing fire and columns of smoke ascending from its central sections. Such eyewitness reports have been given from earliest times. They also have testified to the presence of sulfurous fumes coming from the lake. And one scientist in our modern era has observed a hue of absinthe (the Wormwood of Revelation 8:11) hovering on occasion over the lake.

Where is this biblical lake located? It is not difficult to discover its whereabouts if one will pay attention to some of the identifying factors associated with the lake. Let’s notice some of these points.

**(1)**The **first** important matter to consider is what constitutes “a lake” as humans are able to perceive it. The dictionary defines a lake as an area of depression in the earth that contains a liquid (normally water). It always has higher ground surrounding it, and in the case of ordinary lakes, it represents the central area of a drainage region into which streams and/or rivers flow. Since the apostle John in the Book of Revelation used the common term for “lake,” it could be reasonably believed that he had a conventional lake in mind though he said it was **“The Lake of THE Fire”**!

**(2) Second**, this particular lake had fire associated with it, and the fire was fueled by sulfur. Someway, that chemical must be found in its midst.

**(3) Third**, John tells us that the lake will be in existence and active with fire prior to the Millennium (Revelation 19:20). This means it will be fully in evidence before the Second Advent of our Lord to this earth.

**(4) Fourth**, the Beast and False Prophet who fight against Christ at His coming will be thrown into it. Since it is made plain in the Bible that the final battles to be fought just prior to the Millennium will be at or around Jerusalem, it could reasonably be suggested that the lake would be located in the same vicinity. Indeed, it is plainly shown that the wicked will be tormented with fire and brimstone

**“… in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascends up for the ages of the ages: and they have no rest day or night.”**

* ***Revelation 14:10–11***

This is a direct reference to Isaiah 34:8–10:

**“For it is the day of YHWH’s vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion. And the streams** [of Edom] s**hall be turned into pitch, and the dust into brimstone, and the land** [of Edom] **shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke shall go up forever** [for the age]**: from generation to generation it shall lie waste.”**

* ***Isaiah 34:8–10***

This burning of Edom (an area that borders the southern and southeastern portions of the Dead Sea) occurs when **“the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll”** (Isaiah 34:4) just like the Book of Revelation says will happen at the Second Advent of Christ (Revelation 6:14). This region of Edom will have its streambeds flowing with rivers of fire. This pitch and brimstone will flow into the Dead Sea located just east of Jerusalem. Since this judgment takes place so near to Jerusalem, it could be reasoned that “The Lake of the Fire” was nearby.

**(5)**There is also a **fifth** point. John says the lake has the factor of death associated with it. **“The Lake of the Fire ... is the second death.”** This is where Hades (hell) and Death are to be cast (Revelation 20:14). This reference shows that **“the Lake of the Fire”** cannot be a symbol of the ordinary grave (Hades), because Hades is “thrown” into it.

**(6) Sixth**, the lake cannot be Gehenna (another name of “hell” in the King James Version). The area of Gehenna (sometimes called Tophet) is a valley located on the southern edges of Jerusalem. In no way can the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) be considered “a lake.”

It is also not the “bottomless pit” (Greek: abyss) because that is a pit in the earth with a door that a key can open (Revelation 9:1–2). Admittedly, the description of the abyss is figurative, but it is hardly suitable to connect a door and a key with the entrance to “a lake”!

**(7)**A final **seventh** factor to consider is John’s teaching that this Lake of the Fire will cease to exist after the Great White Throne period. This is because John says **“the former things** [including the Lake of the Fire] **are passed away. Behold, I make all things NEW”** (Revelation 21:4–5). The area in which this lake is found will one day be healed and made new. Interestingly, there are some important scriptures that speak of a prominent lake being healed.

These seven factors are not of themselves enough to identify the lake, but they give us some excellent clues that become significant when we look at other scriptures and a number of historical indications.

***A Major Key***

There is a prime New Testament reference which goes a long way in solving the identification of **“The Lake of the Fire.”** It is found in the Book of Jude. This New Testament writer was the brother of James, and the half-brother of our Lord. He said that there was, in his time, an EXAMPLE of eternal fire [“age-lasting” fire] that was an active and present witness to what the judgment of God would be like in the future. That example was the geographical area where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah once existed. Jude called attention to the ruined condition of that region, as well as the fire that was still burning in the locale. That is correct; the area around the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was still having fires and smoke in the time of Jude! Notice carefully what he said on the matter.

**“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication** [promiscuity] **and going over to strange flesh, are set forth** [are presently set forth] **for an EXAMPLE, suffering** [are presently suffering] **the vengeance of age-lasting fire.”**

* ***Jude verse 7***

When one looks at that verse closely, it tells us very much about the environment around the Dead Sea as it existed in the time of Jude! There were then active fires and smoke in the area. Strabo, the 1st century geographer, described the neighborhood as **“a land of fires.”** **[1](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1)**Some of the fires were fed by the seepage of naphtha (an old name for petroleum), bitumen, and other gaseous fumes.

A hundred years before Strabo, there is the record of a Jewish author who described the Dead Sea area.

**“Wisdom saved a man** [Lot] **from a destruction of the godless, and he escaped the fire that came down on the Five Cities, cities whose wickedness is still attested by a SMOKING waste.”**

* ***Wisdom of Solomon 10:7***

This historical reference indicates that the Dead Sea region was then, back at that time, still smoking from subterranean fires. Diodorus Siculus, who also lived in the 1st century BC, said: **“The fire which burns beneath the ground and the stench render the inhabitants of the neighboring country sickly and very short-lived”** (Book 2.48.8).

A few years later, in the time of Christ’s childhood, the Jewish writer Philo gave witness to the burnings and smoke that were still ascending.

**“The fire of the lightning is most difficult to extinguish, and creeps on pervading everything and smoldering. And a most evident proof of this is to be found in what IS SEEN TO THIS DAY: for the smoke which is still emitted, and the sulphur that men dig up there, are a proof of the calamity which befell that country.”**

* ***On Abraham 1.140–141,*Yonge translation** **[2](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2)**

This fire and smoke was also seen coming from the midst of the Dead Sea as well. The geographer Strabo called the Dead Sea a “lake” (as did Josephus, the early Jewish historian **[3](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3)**) , and described the fiery characteristics which came from its center. Strabo wrote:

**“In the midst of the lake is the source of the fire and also there are great quantities of asphalt in the middle. The eruption is uncertain, because the movements of fire have no order known to us, as it is of many other gases.”**

* ***The Geography of Strabo,*Book XVI, chapter 2, §44** **[4](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4)**

Strabo continues:

**“Together with the asphalt there arises a great deal of soot, smoke, and** [gases] **invisible to the sight, by which brass, silver, and everything shining, even gold, is tarnished.”**

* ***The Geography of Strabo,*Book XVI, chapter 2, §42**

Around the area were **“drops of pitch distilling from the rocks** [petroleum]**, and boiling streams.”**

**“The lake was formed by earthquakes and boiling outbursts OF FIRE, and hot water impregnated with bitumen and brimstone**[sulfur]**.”**

* ***The Geography of Strabo,*Book XVI, chapter 2, §44**

It is interesting to note that the eruptions of fire, smoke, and asphalt were not continuous. Only at irregular times did such phenomena occur, but the occasions were frequent enough that eyewitnesses around the time of Christ and the apostles called it a lake of fire and smoke. In fact, we are told by Henry Maundrell (an English traveler to Palestine in 1697 AD) that most of the mapmakers prior to the 17th century show **“smoke ascending above the surface of the water.”** **[5](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn5)** However, when Maundrell visited the area, no smoke was seen by him. Yet the explorer Volney in 1787 AD was told that smoke periodically could be observed coming out of the Dead Sea.

**“The south of Syria, that is, the hollow through which the Jordan flows, is a country of volcanoes** [volcanic activity]**: the bituminous and sulfurous sources of the Lake Asphaltis** [the Dead Sea]**, the lava, the pumice stones thrown upon its banks, and the hot-baths of Tiberius, demonstrate that this valley has been the seat of subterranean fire, which is not yet extinguished. Clouds of smoke are often observed to issue from the lake, and new crevices to be formed upon its banks.”**

* **Volney,*Travels,*vol. 1, pp. 281–282**

Volney was a very astute observer and he customarily inquired of the inhabitants about the characteristics of the lands in which he visited. It seems, then, that as late as the 18thcentury, there were still some rare outbursts of smoke and fire coming from the middle of the lake. There have been no actual reports since that time to my knowledge. It is true, however, that after major earthquakes, a great deal of asphalt has broken up in the bottom of the lake and arisen to the surface. The lake itself has seemingly been rather quiet compared to activity formerly described near the time of Christ.

The first scientific investigation of the Dead Sea by Lynch in 1848 AD recounted that there was **“a strong smell of sulfuretted hydrogen,”** a **“fetid sulfurous odor in the night,”“the north wind was quite fresh and accompanied with a smell of sulfur”**(*Journal of R. Soc.* vol. XVIII, p. 127). This describes some of the factors comprising **“The Lake of the Fire and Brimstone** [sulfur]**”** in the Book of Revelation, but, of course, there was no actual smoke seen by Lynch. He did, however, on another occasion report a strange phenomenon that happened. One time there “appeared” to be smoke coming from the center, though Lynch attributed it to an illusion.

**“At one time today the sea assumed an aspect peculiarly sombre. ... The great evaporation enveloped it in a thin, transparent vapor its purple tinge contrasting strangely with the extraordinary color of the sea beneath, and, where they blended in the distance, giving it the appearance of smoke from burning sulfur It seemed a vast cauldron of metal, fused but motionless. In the afternoon of the same day it looked like molten lead. At night it had the exact hue of absinthe** [or Wormwood]**.”**

* ***Journal of Royal Society,*ibid. pp. 276, 324**

In the Book of Revelation, absinthe is called “Wormwood” (Revelation 8:11) which caused waters to become bitter. What the explorer Lynch observed is interesting. The scene gave the impression of smoke from burning sulfur ascending above the surface of the Dead Sea, while parts of the lake gave the appearance of a vast cauldron of molten lead. Is this illusory occurrence seen by Lynch what the ancients were talking about? Maybe ... in part! But there is simply too much evidence from competent observers of the past to dismiss all the eyewitness accounts as illusionary. Indeed, only at certain times in the past did the lake erupt with its fiery display. And for the last 200 years (maybe much longer), the lake has been relatively inactive.

The prophecies, however, suggest (and we will show this later in the article) that a new and more violent eruption of sulfurous fire and smoke is destined to emerge from the lake and surrounding areas, and that **“The Lake of the Fire”** mentioned in the Book of Revelation will be very much active at the time of Christ’s Second Advent to this earth. Such a possibility should surprise none of us moderns because we have all witnessed the eruption of Mount St. Helens in Washington State in 1980. The Dead Sea area may well be getting ready for a renewal of its fiery activity. There are yet a few years ahead of us before this will occur. In fact, it will happen at an exact time in prophetic history.

***“The Lake of the Fire” is the Dead Sea!***

We will now show biblical evidence that the Dead Sea is the prophesied **“Lake of the Fire.”** Let us recall that Jude said that the area of Sodom and Gomorrah was a present example (in Jude’s time) for the eternal (age-lasting) fire that God has designed for the punishment of the wicked (Jude verse 7). The Bible tells us that those cities of which Jude spoke are now under the Dead Sea. The former Valley of Siddim in which Sodom and Gomorrah were situated **“is the salt sea”** (Genesis 14:3).

These cities were positioned in the northern parts of where the Dead Sea now is. They were not in the southern part of the lake! This is made plain in the biblical revelation. Abraham and Lot looked over Sodom and Gomorrah from the site of Bethel located about ten miles north of Jerusalem. In no way would it have been possible for Abraham and Lot to have seen the southern part of the lake from Bethel (Genesis 13:10). The Bible, on the other hand, makes the clear statement that those two cities were “east” of Bethel (Genesis 13:11), not south-by-east!


**Figure  1:  US Geological Survey,** <http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/project-pages/dead_sea/tectonic.html>,
accessed January 4, 2010

Even the biblical description of the four northern kings attacking Sodom and Gomorrah, shows them circling the Valley of Siddim on the east and then south, and finally attacking Hazazon-tamar EnGedi [now half way up the western side of the Dead Sea] before they encountered the King of Sodom (Genesis 14:7–8). This, again, shows that Sodom and Gomorrah lay in the northern regions of the Dead Sea. We are also told that the Wilderness of Zeboim (a near spelling of Zeboiim, the neighbor city of Sodom) was directly east of Beth-boron and Bethel (1 Samuel 13:18). This also leads one from Bethel eastwards towards Jericho. Again, this directs us to the northern parts around the Dead Sea, not its southern section.

The northern half of the lake is its deepest part. Its surface is about 1300 feet below normal sea level, and soundings have been made in its northern sector of another 1300 feet to reach its bottom. It is truly the lowest area on earth below normal sea level.

The Dead Sea is a part of what is called the Jordan rift a great depression (or fault line) in the earth that starts north of Mount Hermon and continues southerly with the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, and the Dead Sea in its nether regions. The rift continues south to the Gulf of Aqaba, the Red Sea, into Africa, and ends up near the source of the Nile River. It is the longest known fault line on earth. From satellite pictures, it is a very prominent feature on the surface of the earth, well distinguished from other land formations.

***The Chasm of the Jordan the Example of Punishment***

There is a reason why Jude centered his example of future judgment on the ancient area of Sodom and Gomorrah. To him the Dead Sea (with its sulfurous smoke and fiery characteristics) was the perfect exemplar given by God for His vengeance upon evil angels and wicked humans. He could simply point to the smoldering cauldron of the Dead Sea and tell the rebellious people that they would finally experience the ravages of that Lake of Fire when it would burst forth in a final and catastrophic eruption at the end of the age. Jude could also point to historical examples to substantiate his prophetic beliefs. His prototypes of punishment were recorded in the Book of Genesis! In fact, Jude’s reference to judgment went back before the Flood of Noah. Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, was a prophet that foretold even the Second Advent of Christ (Jude verse 14). He was also a prophet that gave many warnings of judgment. He even foretold the exact year for the occurrence of the Flood of Noah. The son of Enoch was Methuselah. The names of individuals often had prophetic meaning to them in ancient times. The name Methuselah, when broken down into its elements, meant “Die-Will-Send.”

Philo, the Jewish philosopher in the early period of Christ’s life, acknowledged that this was the meaning of his name (*Posterity of Cain*1.44 and 1.73). This name was a prophecy by Enoch of the coming judgment upon the pre-Flood world. It actually meant that when this son of Enoch would die, **“It** [the Flood] **would be sent.”** And amazingly, the Flood of Noah started in the very year that Methuselah died. The prophecy came true! Methuselah did not die in the Flood; he died just a few days or weeks before it! The reason Methuselah lived to be the oldest man who ever lived (969 years of age) was to show that God will give people a long, long time to repent of evil before He will execute any prophesied judgment!

That may all be fine and good, but what has this to do with the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah which was an example of the end-time vengeance of God? It has very much to do with it. One should pay careful attention to the fact that Noah (the man who was saved through the Flood) was the TENTH GENERATION of man (Genesis chapter 5 and 1 Chronicles 1:1–4). God gave the pre-Flood world exactly ten generations before their judgment came.

The fact that the Flood happened in the tenth generation from creation was important to early biblical interpreters. This is because Enoch, according to Jude, also prophesied of the second judgment to occur on earth when the Lord would appear from heaven with ten thousands of his saints (Jude verses 14–16). This particular judgment was to be with fire, not water! Moreover, God promised that no more universal punishment would come through the agency of water (Genesis 8:21–22). When one compares later prophecies of the Bible, the next adjudication was to arrive on earth in the form of fire and brimstone. In ancient times it became popular to view history and prophecy as occurring in a cyclical fashion (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Things significantly reoccurred! Note that Noah was the tenth generation of man: (1) Adam, (2) Seth, (3) Enos (4) Cainan, (5) Mahalaleel, (6) Jared, (7) Enoch, (8) Methuselah, (9) Lamech, and finally (10) Noah in whose time the Flood destroyed the world!

Now note the next generation to follow Noah after the Flood. It was (1) Shem, then (2) Arphaxad, (3) Salah, (4) Eber, (5) Peleg, (6) Reu, (7) Serug, (8) Nahor, (9) Terah, (10) Abraham. The tenth generation from the watery destruction in the time of Noah was Abraham. With Noah, God began a new creation in a physical way, but with Abraham (also the tenth generation), God began a new spiritual creation. But He also did something else. A further judgment against rebellion and sin took place in that tenth generation just as one took place in Noah’s tenth generation. God did not bring the later destruction by water, but it was to be by FIRE! This was the time that fire and brimstone fell on Sodom, Gomorrah, and the Valley of Siddim. So thorough was the devastation that the whole of the Jordan Valley appeared as though there was a thorough burning up of the entire world.

That opinion was expressed by Lot’s daughters. **“There is not a man** [left] **in the earth,”**was their appraisal (Genesis 19:31). They thought the world had come to an end by the fire and brimstone. After all, it was the tenth generation from Noah! What a surprise they had when they discovered that only the Jordan rift valley was destroyed. It was a great enough devastation, however, that it became the example of the future judgment that God will rain down on rebellious men at the end of the age.

In order to warn men of this future judgment, Jude understood the Jordan Valley as a contemporary example of a bursting forth of periodic flames of sulfurous origin, with columns of smoke coming from the land and the lake. It was a further admonition of what would occur at the end of the age, only this time with even more intensity. This is why Jude placed the example of God’s judgment for the future directly into the Jordan rift valley of his time right to the area of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea was once **“The Lake of the Fire,”** and it is destined to become that same “Lake of the Fire” at the time of Christ’s Second Advent.

***Further Testimony***

We should briefly remind ourselves of the parable given by Christ about Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19–31). The locale of that story is precisely in the area of the Jordan rift and the northern region of the Dead Sea. Here was the Rich Man after death in the place of fire. He looked and saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham.

Between Abraham and the Rich Man was a **“great gulf fixed”** (Luke 16:26). The great gulf is clearly the Jordan rift valley. The Rich Man was east of the Jordan River, and Lazarus and Abraham were west of it. The latter two were inheriting the promises of the land of Palestine given to Abraham, but the Rich Man (Judah) was not allowed to enter. He had to remain in the region of the fires! That area was just east of Jordan, north of the Dead Sea, but in an area of continual and unrelenting flames.

The significance of the parable (and it was a parable, not an actual occurrence), was to show that the region of the **“great gulf”** was a place of punishment. It was in the same location that Jude placed the example of age-lasting fire to try the wicked in the future (Jude verse 7). **[6](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn6)**

***The Valley of Hinnom***

With the information that the great chasm or gulf of the Jordan rift (with the smoking Dead Sea in its midst) is the place of punishment for the wicked, we can now understand much better the position of Gehenna, the Valley of Hinnom, in this scheme of future punishment. Our Lord frequently referred to Gehenna as a place of fiery judgment (Matthew 5:22, 29–30, 10:28; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5, etc.). This particular valley was situated outside the southern walls of Jerusalem. It was a place where the fires to the pagan god Moloch were sanctified (Jeremiah 32:35; Ezekiel 20:31). It was also called Tophet.

**“For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king** [the evil king] **it is prepared; he has made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of YHWH, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.”**

* ***Isaiah 30:33***

It is the prison where some “high ones” (angels) and kings on earth will be incarcerated. Within the stretch of its confines is a very deep pit (a bottomless pit) and is the place of containment for evil angels and finally for Satan during the Millennium (Revelation 20:1–3). We will see in a moment that indications show that this pit of imprisonment (the abyss) is associated with the Valley of Hinnom (Tophet).

The Valley of Hinnom commenced at Jerusalem and journeyed eastwards at a precipitous rate until it emptied into the northern parts of the Dead Sea. The watercourse is known to this very day as the Wady (the streambed) of FIRE! This Valley of Hinnom (the Gehenna of scripture) was about fifteen miles long. It plummeted into the Dead Sea (The Lake of the Fire). This means that Gehenna and **“the Lake of the Fire”** were typically connected.

The ceremony of the Scapegoat (Azazel) on the Day of Atonement was a part of this typical story (Leviticus chapter 16). Two goats were selected. One was to be sacrificed in Jerusalem, while the other was to be taken by an able-bodied man into the wilderness east of Jerusalem. Indeed, the Scapegoat was to be taken down the Valley of Hinnom to a place about three miles east and south of Jerusalem called Beth Chaduda where the goat was allowed to go over a very deep cliff (like an abyss) so that he would never come in contact with civilization again (Yoma 67b; Targum Pseudo Jonathan 14:10 and Targum Onkelos Leviticus 16:10).

This part of the wilderness was where the demons were supposed to be. It was near this region where Christ was tempted of the Devil (Matthew 4:1–11). The place was a part of the drainage system of the Wady en-Nar the extension of Gehenna, the Streambed of Fire! From this area, **“the Valley of Fire”** (Gehenna) ran directly eastwards into the Dead Sea (**“The Lake of the Fire”**). This region between Beth Chaduda and the Dead Sea contained the abyss mentioned in the Book of Revelation. It will be a place of temporary confinement of Satan and his angelic powers for the Millennium.

**“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit** [the abyss] **and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon** [just like the “fit man” of Leviticus 16:21 with the Scapegoat], **that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut him up**[away from mankind and civilization]**, and set a seal on him that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: after that he must be loosed a little season.”**

* ***Revelation 20:1–3***

The place that the Azazel Goat (the Scapegoat) was taken in the ritual of the Day of Atonement is where Satan will be kept for the Millennium. Again, it is also the place in the wilderness where Christ defeated Satan during His forty days of temptation. Everything fits perfectly in this prophetic scenario.

***The Place of the Scapegoat***

No one can adequately grasp the typical teaching about Gehenna, the abyss (bottomless pit), and the Lake of Fire, without realizing what the area is like in which the Scapegoat was taken. The geographical name of the region is the Wilderness of Judaea. It is one of the unique areas on earth. That wilderness is an utter desert of the worst kind, and yet it was right next door to the region **“of olive oil, and honey: a land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack any thing in it”** (Deuteronomy 8:8–9). The margin between “paradise” and “utter desolation” is often no more than one, two, or three miles. People who travel to the area are amazed at the abrupt contrast.

George Adam Smith, who wrote the classic book [*The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*](http://archive.org/details/historicalgeogra00smit)*,*gave some graphic descriptions of this wasteland to the east of Jerusalem. Though I have seen it myself many times, the words of a professional geographer cannot be surpassed for description. Note what Professor Smith had to say about this land of the Scapegoat:

* **“**[T]**he wilderness of Judaea. In the Old Testament this land is called the Jeshinion, a word meaning devastation”** (p. 312).
* **“It is one of the driest and most poisoned regions on our planet”** (p. 269).
* **“Those fifteen miles of chaos** [east of Jerusalem]**, sinking**[downward] **to a stretch of the Dead Sea, you begin to understand the influence of the desert on Jewish imagination and literature. It gave the ancient natives of Judaea … the sense of living next door to doom; the sense of how narrow is the border between life and death; the awe of the power of God, who can make contiguous regions so opposite in character”** (p. 314).
* **“For hours, as you travel across these hills, you may feel no sign of life, except the scorpions and vipers which your passage startles, in the distance a few wild goats or gazelles, and at night the wailing of the jackal and the hyena’s howl”** (p. 317).
* From **“the heart of the country”** near Jerusalem, the wilderness of Judaea **“carries the violence and desolation”** right down to the Dead Sea Valley (p. 313–314).

There could hardly be an area more foreboding and awesomely stark on the surface of this earth! What is so striking is the contrast. A beautiful and well watered land on the west side and crests of the Holy Land, that then so quickly and abruptly changes to the thorough desolation of the “Land of the Scapegoat,” the region traversed by Gehenna (the Streambed of Fire), the location of the abyss (bottomless pit), and reaching to the Dead Sea (**“the Lake of the Fire”**).

This is the very region where Christ battled Satan for forty days and won! But this is also where Satan will be bound (the area of the Scapegoat) for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1–3). There could be no harsher area for confinement. This is the region of the abyss (the bottomless pit) of the Book of Revelation.

The abyss into which Satan is shut up is not the Lake of Fire! He is only placed in the abyss for 1000 years. Only after the Millennium is Satan cast into the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone (Revelation 20:10). Satan will be kept in a deep pit (a prison) east of Jerusalem between Beth Chaduda and the Dead Sea within the region of the Valley of Fire, the eastern parts of Gehenna.

***Mention in the Book of Enoch***

In a book written about 100 years before the birth of Christ and attributed to Enoch, we have more information about these matters as understood by Jewish people who lived back at that time. This Book of Enoch is not a canonical book of the Bible, but it is referred to by Jude in verses 14–15 of his epistle. It does describe a great deal of information that is very compatible with teachings found in the Book of Revelation. The Book of Enoch gives much typical teaching about Gehenna, the Abyss, and the Lake of Fire, as believed in many Jewish quarters in the time of Christ.

In this book, the ancient Enoch was supposed to have seen in vision the manner in which God would judge evil angels and wicked men. In Enoch 54:1, he sees **“a deep valley with burning fire.”** This is the streambed of Gehenna as it leaves Jerusalem for its eastward trek to the Wilderness of Judaea and the Dead Sea. Once a person starts down the streambed, he gets closer to the wilderness. He then comes in contact with the kings and the mighty mentioned in Isaiah 24:21–22. This is the place of the pit (or the abyss). It answers to the Beth Chaduda region where the Scapegoat (the Azazel) is cast into an abyss down a steep and precipitous cliff. The Book of Enoch says this is where **“iron chains are placed on those who descend into its bosom.”** The bosom of the abyss is the place (or places) where the evil angels will be confined temporarily.

* **“These are being prepared for the hosts of Azael, so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss** [the bottomless pit] **of complete condemnation”**(Enoch 54:5).
* **“And God will imprison those angels, who have shown unrighteousness in that burning valley**[that is, the eastern parts of Gehenna, the Wady en-Nar] **in the mountains of Israel”** (Enoch 67:4).

This was the very place where the Scapegoat (the Azazel goat) was taken in the ritual of The Day of Atonement. As said before, this was in an area down the Wady en-Nar east of Beth Chaduda (also spelled Hadudo) about three miles easterly of Jerusalem (see *Mishnah,*Yoma, 6.5). **[7](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn7)** The Book of Enoch goes on to say that it is the same place where a **“star had fallen from heaven ... into the abyss: now that abyss** [the bottomless pit] **was narrow and deep, and horrible, and dark”** (Enoch 88:1–2).

The apostle John in the Book of Revelation spoke of the same place.

**“I saw a star fall from heaven into the earth: and to him was given the key to the bottomless pit** [the abyss]**. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace.”**

* ***Revelation 9:1–2***

The Book of Enoch also said the archangels of God will take hold of Azazel (the Scapegoat) with his angels **“and cast them into the burning furnace”** (Enoch 54:6).

***A Temporary, Not a Final Prison***

The Book of Enoch (as does the Book of Revelation) recognizes the abyss as only a place of temporary punishment. Professor R.H. Charles, who translated the Book of Enoch, said this**“prison is the burning valley (Gehenna) … and this is the preliminary prison, not the final.”** **[8](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn8)** The apostle John in the Book of Revelation said the same thing. Satan will be placed in the abyss for 1000 years. He is only placed in the Lake of the Fire (a different place from the abyss) after the Millennium is over (Revelation 20:1–10).

As said before, the typical location of this abyss is where the Scapegoat was taken a few miles east of Jerusalem down the Valley of Fire (the eastern extension of Gehenna). This abyss was somehow supposed to be connected with the lowest waters **“under the earth”**and sometimes those waters were considered hot and boiling. This is where angels and Satan are to be bound. These are the ones that the apostle Paul refers to when he spoke about those **“under the earth”** in Philippians 2:10. The apostle Peter said that some angels had been placed there as early as the Flood of Noah (1 Peter 3:19–20). Christ even went to preach to those angels in that prison back in the time of Noah.

But as said before, this abyss is not the final place of punishment for the rebellious. That last place is “The Lake of the Fire.” That “lake” is located farther on down the mountain from the abyss just east of Beth Chaduda. It descends further to the lowest habitable spot on this earth, which is the Dead Sea (the Lake of Fire). The Book of Enoch calls this area the **“valley of the angels who led astray mankind burned beneath that land”** (Enoch 67:7). This is a reference to the Jordan rift valley where the Dead Sea is located.

This was the area mentioned by Jude, set forth as an example of age-lasting fire (Jude verse 7). The depths of Tartarus (where the evil angels were kept) were somehow connected with these final waters of judgment. Into these depths will flow **“streams of fire,”** according to the Book of Enoch (67:7). **[9](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn9)**

Remarkably, there is a prophecy of the future (connected with Christ’s Second Advent) that says all the streambeds of the country of Edom, located in the southeastern watershed of the Dead Sea area, will become filled with fire and burning pitch.

**“For it is the day of YHWH’s vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. And the streams shall be turned into pitch, and the dust into brimstone, and the land** [of Edom] **shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for the age** [*olam*]:**from generation to generation it shall lie waste.”**

* ***Isaiah 34:8–10***

This happens at the exact time the heavens depart as a scroll (Isaiah 34:4) and this is directly quoted in the Book of Revelation as a time associated with Christ’s Second Advent (Revelation 6:14).

These are the several streams of Edom that will flow into the Dead Sea. The streams will traverse part of the Valley of Jehoshaphat called in Joel 3:12–14 the Valley of Decision. This area of the southern portion of the Dead Sea will be the location of the greatest military action in history. The nations of the world will assemble at Armageddon and journey to Jerusalem and to this Valley of Decision at the southern end of the Dead Sea to fight with Christ at his Second Advent. **[10](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn10)** This is the same battle when Gog (the leader of these armies in the Valley of Decision) will have **“great hailstones, fire, and brimstone”**coming down on him and his rebellious army. The whole countryside near the Dead Sea will once again become a fiery furnace when the judgment of God begins to occur at the coming of Christ back to this earth.

***Future Reactivation of the Dead Sea Fires***

The Dead Sea east of Jerusalem is the Lake of Fire mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Today when one goes to the area, there are no fires or smoke to be seen coming from its midst. Throughout most of the historical period since the time of Abraham, however, it was normally described as a lake that periodically erupted with sulfurous flames and columns of smoke could be seen emerging from its center. But for some reason over the past two centuries or so, the lake has been quiet. Though some earthquakes have occurred in the region which have loosed a great deal of asphalt from its bottom, and this has risen to the surface, nothing has happened that would cause any of us to call the Dead Sea a “Lake of Fire” as most people of the past would have described it.

This will all change. The Book of Revelation shows clearly that “the Lake of the Fire”will be in existence at the Second Advent (Revelation 19:19–20). We may not have many years left to see its reactivation occur. An event is mentioned by the apostle John that could well be the catalyst that reactivates the fire. When the sixth seal of the Book of Revelation is opened, a most remarkable thing takes place.

**“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their place.”**

* ***Revelation 6:12–14***

This gigantic earthquake is associated with the time when the heavens depart as a scroll. There is only one place in the entire Bible that speaks of this exact phenomenon. That is when the streams of Edom will become burning pitch:

**“For it is the day of YHWH’s vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.”**

* ***Isaiah 34:8–9***

This occurs when:

**“… all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.”**

* ***Isaiah 34:4–5***

These fiery streams of Edom will flow directly into the Dead Sea.

But there is more! This event that Isaiah tells about is also the exact time that **“the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of YHWH come”** (Joel 2:31). This is when the nations of the world assemble in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

**“Assemble yourselves, and come, all you heathen** [nations]**, and gather yourselves together round about. ... Let the heathen** [nations] **be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.**

**Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of YHWH is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall cease their shining. ... And the heavens and the earth shall shake.”**

* ***Joel 3:11–12, 14–16***

At the great earthquake, and when the nations are gathered around the Dead Sea area (in the Valley of Jehoshaphat), that is when the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. Since the streams of Edom (which are in the same general region) will become burning pitch, and fire and brimstone will rain down on the heathen at the great shaking against Gog and his forces (Ezekiel 38:19–22), there will be a great conflagration from heaven around the Dead Sea.

Christ said there will also be darkness and obscurity over Jerusalem (Matthew 24:29). In another place Christ said to remember the example of Lot (Luke 17:22–37). Lot fled from the cities of the plains of Jordan from the Dead Sea area. That was when the whole of the Jordan rift valley went up in smoke. Jude said this area was the example of the future judgment that was to come upon the rebellious (Jude verse 7).

This is the exact region of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, though that location is in the southern part of the Dead Sea area. Throughout the region we are told that the blood will flow as high as horses’ bridles. It will do so for 1600 furlongs (stadia). That equals about 184 miles (Revelation 14:20). The valley in which this will happen is **“without the city.”** The city under discussion was “Mystery Babylon,” which is Jerusalem at the end of the age.

The Jordan rift valley from Mount Hermon to the end of the watershed south of the Dead Sea is almost exactly 1600 furlongs in length. This again is clearly the rift valley east of Jerusalem, the great chasm or gulf where Sodom and Gomorrah once were. It is also where the Dead Sea is! Since the whole of the Jordan rift depression went up in fire and smoke and brimstone in the time of Abraham and Lot (Genesis 19:28–29), this territory will once again become the fiery crucible that it once was. Jude tells us that the first incineration was only a type, an example of the final holocaust. Jude said: **“Likewise** [in the same fashion],**will the judgment occur when YHWH comes with ten thousands of his saints”** (Jude verse 14). **[11](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn11)**

It is primarily the smoke that comes from the reigniting of the Dead Sea that causes the sun, moon, and stars to be darkened. This is when the Dead Sea will once again become**“The Lake of the Fire”** that it was periodically in the time of Christ. Even the sun being darkened at the time of Christ’s crucifixion could have come by an eruption of the Dead Sea (Matthew 27:45), and Peter must have been referring to a recent darkening of the sun and moon when he mentioned Joel’s prophecy in Acts 2:17–20. That darkening smoke referred to in the prophecy had to emerge from the Valley of Jehoshaphat in the area south of the Dead Sea. God could have bestowed at Christ’s crucifixion a foretaste of the judgment to come from the Lake of Fire.

This all means that the Dead Sea region is once again to become **“The Lake of the Fire.”**It will occur just before the Day of the Lord when gigantic earthquakes and heavenly disturbances take place. There are yet, however, a few more years before this occurs. There is a day coming when the Dead Sea will erupt with a holocaust that will make Mount St. Helens of recent date [1980] seem like child’s play. It will be a spectacle to see. Thankfully the Bible teaches that all of God’s people will be able to escape (as did Lot) this wrath of God’s vengeance to come (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

***The Lake of the Fire to be Healed***

Once Christ has returned to this earth and established his kingdom, Ezekiel says that a river of fresh water will emerge from underneath a new temple that will be built in the high country of Israel (Ezekiel chapter 47). This fresh water stream will go eastwards into the Dead Sea. It could well follow the old watercourse of the Wady (the Streambed) of Fire and change the characteristics of the land bordering it. This is no doubt what will occur because we are told that an abundance of fruit trees and medicinal plants will flourish around its banks (Ezekiel 47:12). This would mean that there would no longer be any Gehenna (Valley of Fire) going through that terrible wilderness. In fact, we have the express teaching of the Bible that Gehenna (otherwise called Tophet) will become holy to the Lord.

**“And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto YHWH.”**

* ***Jeremiah 31:40***

This will be the end of Gehenna!

With the Book of Ezekiel telling us that a river of fresh water will issue forth from the new temple (and gets larger as it approaches the Dead Sea), perhaps the river is fed by other streams as it descends and this will result in parts of the Wilderness of Judaea being healed (especially those quarters on the banks of the river). The region of the abyss, however, where Satan will be imprisoned, will remain in desolation as well as parts surrounding the Dead Sea (Ezekiel 47:11).

The great quantities of fresh water flowing into the Dead Sea will cause it to become fresh and clean with a great number of fish within its borders.

**“And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea**[the Mediterranean]**, exceeding many.”**

* ***Ezekiel 47:10***

How long it will take the Dead Sea to become “alive” is not recorded. Since there will be a long period of time when peace and safety will be on earth, and a time when many of the deserts will blossom, it could be that several years or even centuries will take place before the whole of the Jordan rift area is healed. But it will be healed and made beautiful once again!

***More Fire to Come***

This is still not the end of **“the Lake of the Fire,”** however! The Book of Revelation says there will yet be one more outburst of fire and brimstone that issues from the lake. It will once again, at the end of the Millennium, become a Lake of Fire. This will happen when God sends down fire out of heaven (Revelation 20:9) to judge the wicked at the conclusion of the 1000 years!

This happens when Satan is finally released from the abyss (the bottomless pit) and he is allowed to cause a final rebellion to God. Dire consequences will come from God because of this. And no wonder! People on earth will have witnessed for such a long time the beauties and blessings of the Kingdom of God on earth even with Gehenna and **“the Lake of the Fire”** healed, and yet they allow themselves to be tempted of Satan the Devil. Because of this, God will re-activate the old area of punishment. This time, Satan will be cast into the renewed Lake of Fire. This will last throughout the ages of the Great White Throne.

***EXCURSUS:***The Bible nowhere tells us how long those ages within that judgment period will last. Some have applied the reference of Isaiah 65:17–25 to this space of time. This is not possible. The scene in Isaiah is millennial, and is not applicable to a later period. It could mean that in the Millennium a generation could be reckoned a hundred years. If so, the millennial duration would answer to ten generations of peace before the judgment at the end of the Millennium when Satan is released from the abyss. If so, then there would have been …

1. ten generations for the pre-flood world until a destruction; also
2. ten generations until the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham’s day; and
3. ten generations of the Millennium that will see a fiery judgment also at its end.

It could well mean that the “ages” that accompany the Great White Throne may also last for a similar period of 1,000 years. No one, of course, can know this for sure! **[12](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn12)**  *ELM*

***The Lake of Fire to Permanently Cease***

When the time of the Great White Throne period is over, God will then create a new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). All the former things (including **“the Lake of the Fire”**) will pass away (Revelation 21:4–5). **“Behold, I make all things NEW”**(Revelation 21:5).

This is when God the Father himself finally comes down to this earth to establish his residence here (Revelation 21:2–3). There will be a New Jerusalem totally unlike any Jerusalem that preceded it. There will be no need for any earthly temple (Revelation 21:22), but there will be a river of water come forth from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1–2). The physical example of water coming from the temple that existed in Ezekiel’s prophecy (the millennial temple) will have served as a foretaste to this one in the new earth.

There will even be nations that God will allow to be on earth at that time (Revelation 21:24–26; 22:2–5). These will be a “new creation” of humans, because all humans who will have lived from the time of Adam to the end of the Great White Throne will now be spiritual beings (1 Timothy 2:4–6). This “new creation” of humans could well be a hint that God has further “creations” of human beings in mind both for this earth, and other regions of the universe because the heavens were capable of receiving inhabitants (Deuteronomy 30:4).

Since the prime characteristic that describes God is His role as “creator” (Genesis 1:1), it could be that the creation of new sons and daughters will continue throughout all eternity. We could no doubt play a part in helping God in His continued creation. After all, we are His children and we shall not only see Him as He is, we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). Our present human race has a destiny that is awesome in potential and glorious in scope.

**“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him.”**

* ***1 Corinthians 2:9***

The time is coming when “death” will be abolished for all who have ever lived (1 Corinthians 15:26). And the final conclusion of all things is that God will become all and in all! (1 Corinthians 15:28). There will then be no more Gehenna, no more abyss, no more Dead Sea (“**Lake of the Fire”**). All that will be left is LIFE — and the beginning of a series of new creations in which we can participate — for all eternity that lies ahead of us! **[13](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn13)**

Ernest L. Martin, 1981
Edited by David Sielaff, February 2010

[1](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) [*The Geography of Strabo,* XVI, chapter 2, §§43–44](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/16B%2A.html), in Vol. VII, H.L. Jones translation, Loeb Classical Library edition, 1932, accessed November 10, 2009.  *DWS*

[2](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2) *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus,* trans. by C.D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854–55).  *DWS*

[3](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref3) Here is Josephus’ extended description of the Dead Sea in his *Wars of the Jews* 4.476–485, Whiston translation:

**“The nature of the Dead Sea is also worth describing. It is, as I have said already, bitter and unfruitful. It is so buoyant that it bears up the heaviest things that are thrown into it; nor is it easy for anyone to make things sink therein to the bottom, if he had a mind so to do. Accordingly, when Vespasian went to see it, he commanded that some who could not swim, should have their hands tied behind them, and be thrown into the deep, when it so happened that they all swam, as if a wind had forced them upwards.**

**Moreover, the change of the colour of this lake is wonderful, for it changes its appearance thrice every day; and as the rays of the sun fall differently upon it, the light is variously reflected. However, it casts up black clods of bitumen in many parts of it; these float on the top of the water, and resemble both in shape and size headless bulls; and when the labourers that belong to the lakecome to it, and catch hold of it as it hangs together, they draw it into their ships; but when the ship is full, it is not easy to cut off the rest, ...**

**This bitumen is not only useful for the caulking of ships, but for the cure of men’s bodies: accordingly, it is mixed in a great many medicines. The length of this lake is about seventy-three miles, where it is extended as far as Zoar in Arabia; and its breadth is about nineteen miles.**

**The country of Sodom borders it. It was of old a most pleasant land, both for the fruits it bore and the riches of its cities, although it be now all burnt up. It is related how, for the impiety of its inhabitants, it was burnt by lightning; in consequence of which there are still the remainders of that divine fire; and the traces**[or shadows] **of the five cities are still to be seen, as well as the ashes growing in their fruits, which fruits have a colour as if they were fit to be eaten, but if you pluck them with your hands, they dissolve into smoke and ashes. And thus what is related of this land of Sodom has these marks of credibility which our very sight affords us.”***DWS*

[4](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref4) Here is a different translation of [*The Geography of Strabo,*XVI, chapter 2, §44](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/16B%2A.html), in Vol. VII, H.L. Jones translation, Loeb Classical Library edition, 1932, accessed November 10, 2009.

**“Many other evidences are produced to show that the country is fiery; for near Moasada** [Masada] **are to be seen rugged rocks that have been scorched, as also, in many places, fissures and ashy soil, and drops of pitch that emit foul odours to a great distance, and ruined settlements here and there; and therefore people believe the oft-repeated assertions of the local inhabitants, that there were once thirteen inhabited cities in that region of which Sodom was the metropolis, but that a circuit of about sixty stadia of that city escaped unharmed; and that by reason of earthquakes and of eruptions of fire and of hot waters containing asphalt and sulphur, the lake burst its bounds, and rocks were enveloped with fire; and, as for the cities, some were swallowed up and others were abandoned by such as were able to escape.”** *DWS*

[5](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref5) Henry Maundrell,p. 454, Bohn Edition that Dr. Martin referenced. The full title is [*A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*](http://books.google.com/books?id=mpMNAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage#PPA143,M1)*: At Easter, A.D. 1697: to which is Added an Account of the Author’s Journey to the Banks of the Euphrates at Beer, and to the Country of Mesopotamia*(S.G. Simpkins, 1836), p. 143 from the Google scanned edition, accessed November 10, 2009.  *DWS*

[6](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref6) Dr. Martin explains the interpretation of this parable in his article “[The Real Meaning of Lazarus and the Rich Man](http://askelm.com/doctrine/d030602.htm).”  *DWS*

[7](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref7) Mishnah Yoma 6:5 [words in brackets are in the original Rodkinson translation]:

**“The high-priest was told: ‘The goat has reached the desert.’ How was the fact known? Watches were stationed on high towers** [meaning doubtful]**, who lifted up flags** [to give signals]**. Said R. Jehudah: ‘They could have excellent evidence**[by calculating the time]**. From Jerusalem to Beth Hadudo was three miles.’”** *DWS*

[8](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref8) R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Vol. 2,*Oxford, 1913, 2004), p. 231.  *DWS*

[9](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref9) Enoch 67:7:

**“And through its valleys proceed streams of fire, where these angels are punished who had led astray those who dwell upon the earth.”** *DWS*

[10](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref10) For even greater detail regarding these very end-time events, see Dr. Martin’s article “[New Prophetic Discoveries Concerning the End Time](http://askelm.com/prophecy/p050301.htm),” where the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the Valley of Decision are indicated in prophecy, complete with maps showing these vital areas. The visual understanding of the text given by these maps will greatly clarify the next several paragraphs.  *DWS*

[11](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref11) This is when these events will intersect directly with your life, at your resurrection from the dead. See my article “Your Resurrection” and the other important articles listed by Dr. Martin on this subject, and particularly in his book *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine* (Portland, OR: ASK Publications, 2001), available both online and for sale as a printed book. The apostle Paul gives more information about this moment in 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10 (Concordant Version):

**“… and to you who are being afflicted, ease, with us, at the unveiling of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful messengers, in flaming fire, dealing out vengeance to those who are not acquainted with God and those who are not obeying the evangel of our Lord Jesus Christ — who shall incur the justice of eonian extermination from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength — whenever He may be coming to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all who believe (seeing that our testimony to you was believed) in that day.”***DWS*

[12](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref12) In 1997 Dr. Martin wrote in his article “[The Time Periods for the Resurrections](http://askelm.com/doctrine/d971005.htm)”:

**“After the Millennium, Satan will be released to cause a final war, and then he will be placed in the Lake of Fire. Then comes the age of the Great White Throne judgment (which Peter says will also last 1000 years — 2 Peter 3:8). This period begins with the earth and the heavens fleeing away (Revelation 20:11) which results in a new earth and a new heaven described in Revelation 21:1 (these two events are the same). This age begins with a resurrection of all those of the first 6000 years (from Adam to the Second Advent) who were not resurrected at Christ’s Second Advent (Revelation chapters 21 & 22).”**

See also my “Addendum: The ‘Age of the Ages’” to Dr. Martin’s 1984 article “[The Doctrine of the Ages in the Bible](http://askelm.com/doctrine/d050101.htm)” which discusses that “aion” of 1,000 years after the millennium. Both will be ruled by Christ. Only after this final “aion” or age will Christ give up all rule to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28). This is a problem for believers in the trinity and theologians call this “subordinationism.” Such subordination of Christ to God the Father has always been the case since Christ’s creation. It will always be a fact on into the future, even beyond the end of the ages, beyond the plan of God for mankind. For a quick background understanding of this subject, see the Wikipedia article “[Subordinationism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subordinationism).” For further study refer to the basic sources listed there.  *DWS*

[13](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref13) For more information on the matter of Gehenna, Hades, Tartarus, and future punishment, see Dr. Martin’s article “[The Biblical Teaching of Hell](http://askelm.com/doctrine/d030601.htm).” Some have had problems with Revelation 21:8:

**“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”**

This verse seems to refer to events that occur after Revelation 21:5 where all things are created new, including “the Lake of Fire.” In 21:5 the Lamb tells the apostle John to write the words of Revelation 21:6–8 that refer to a time before all things are made new. Death has an end (Isaiah 25:8). Regarding the end of death throughout God’s creation, see “[The Death of Death](http://askelm.com/doctrine/d030101a.htm).”  *ELM/DWS*

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**ASK Monthly Newsletters**

**February 2010**

Dear Associates, Students and Friends:

The nature of God’s judgment upon mankind has been a subject of great interest and even concern to people throughout history. They want to know: what will happen to me, my family, friends, and acquaintances; and even what might happen to my enemies and the enemies of God when He judges the world with fire? The article this month by Dr. Ernest L. Martin discusses one important aspect of God’s judgment at the time of the end. The article is a clarification and significant expansion of Dr. Martin’s original 1981 article “[The Lake of Fire — Where Is it Located?](http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p100201.htm)” [**1**](http://www.askelm.com/newsletter/l201002.htm#_ftn1)

Most all scholars and theologians consider the idea of the Lake of Fire to be figurative, used by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation as a metaphor to tell about the terrible intensity of God’s judgment. A few might acknowledge that the Lake of Fire was a historical reality, but fewer still would ever think that the Lake of Fire will exist again in the future. After all, John only intended his references to be symbolic.

If John’s mention of the Lake of Fire was not simply figurative, then what was the reality of that Lake? If the Lake of Fire had a reality in the past, what about the prophecies of a future Lake of Fire? Dr. Martin, differing from other scholars, considers the prophetic to be just as true as the historic and symbolic. All are rooted in biblical reality.

As you will read in this article, there are numerous and detailed historical accounts that show that the Lake of Fire did exist in the past, and John’s audience knew perfectly well the location and phenomena associated with that Lake referred to in John’s prophecies. Dr. Martin shows that the Lake of Fire is literal and it will catch fire again just before Christ returns to this earth.

## *Fire and God in Scripture*

Understand that fire is often associated with God’s presence. Recall the burning bush that appeared to be on fire and was not consumed (Exodus 3:2-4). Fire came **“out from before YHWH”** (Leviticus 9:24). God Himself is described as **“a consuming fire”**(Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29). In vision, Daniel saw fire emanate from God’s throne:

**“I beheld … and the Ancient of days did sit, … his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”**

***• Daniel 7:9–10***

Fire is used as a purifying agent (Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2–3). God’s Holy Spirit also purifies and is likened to literal fire of judgment (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16), and at Pentecost God’s Spirit had an appearance like tongues of fire when it came upon the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4).

In the past God used fire to show His approval of sacrifices made by patriarchs and leaders of Israel (Genesis 8:20, 15:17–18; Leviticus 6:9, 13, 9:24; Judges 6:21; 1 Kings 18:24, 38; 1 Chronicles 21:26; 2 Chronicles 7:1, 3). Fire was used as a demonstration of God’s power at Sinai (Exodus 19:18) and as a guide for Israel (Exodus 13:21). When necessary, God punished directly by fire (Genesis 19:24; Exodus 9:23; Numbers 11:1–3; 16:35; Leviticus 10:1–2).

Certain sacrifices were to be performed by fire (Leviticus chapter 1, 7:5). The smell of sacrifices burnt by fire (roasted meat) was pleasing to God (Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 1:9, 2:3, 3:5, 9). At least one time an entire city was burned as a burnt offering to YHWH (Deuteronomy 13:16). Because fire purifies, God’s word is compared to fire: **“Is not my word like as a fire? Says YHWH”** (Jeremiah 23:29), and:

**“Wherefore thus says YHWH God of hosts, ‘Because you** [Jeremiah] **speak this word, behold, I will make my words in your mouth** [like] **fire, and this people** [like] **wood, and i**t [the fire] **shall devour them.’”**

***• Jeremiah 5:14***

Some of God’s judgments against mankind will come by fire (Psalm 50:3, 97:2–3) and:

**“For, behold, YHWH will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will YHWH plead with all flesh: and the slain of YHWH shall be many.”**

***• Isaiah 66:15–16***

This passage is referenced by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:7–8.

God will destroy the world by fire in the future:

**“Now the day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion** [*pur* in Greek]**, and the earth and the works in it shall be found.**

**At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God’s day, because of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteous­ness is dwelling.”**

***• 2 Peter 3:10–12*Concordant Version**

Fire is referred to as an insignia and badge of severe trials or misfortunes. Indeed, our works of faith will be tried by fire as Christ tells us in Luke 12:49–53, and as Paul and Peter tell us:

**“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”**

***• 1 Corinthians 3:13–15***

**“The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”**

***• 1 Peter 1:7***

## *Thank You*

The world will undergo fiery trial at the end of this present age. Many of you today are enduring personal trials, perhaps not fiery or a judgment from God, but personally devastating nonetheless. With this in mind, we are humbled and honored when we receive your contributions, and are committed to carry on the teaching that we do. Your free-will contributions and prayers help others learn what you have learned, (and continue to learn) as we produce still more valuable biblical teaching. Thank you — all of you — for your continued support.

David W. Sielaff
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[1](http://www.askelm.com/newsletter/l201002.htm#_ftnref1) Dr. Martin later inserted this material from the 1981 article, largely unchanged, in “Appendix 5, Where Is the Lake of Fire” in his book *101 Bible Secrets that Christians Do Not Know.*

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