

THE LAKE OF FIRE

TEXT: REV. 20:10-15; 21:8

Introduction:

1. I am going to speak this morning on “the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14, 15).
2. Sometimes it is referred to as “the lake of fire and brimstone” (19:20; 20:10; 21:8).
3. In the Bible, “fire and brimstone” always signify the hot wrath of God. Our Lord said in Luke 17:29, “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”
4. Our Lord was referring to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:24 says, “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.”
5. Psalm 11:6 says, “Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.”
6. Revelation 14:10 says, “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.”
7. This is a very important subject, one that is overlooked by most preachers. The lost know little about it, and even many Christians are ignorant regarding this doctrine.
8. I have divided my exposition into three parts:

I. IS THE LAKE OF FIRE A LITERAL LAKE?

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HELL AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

III. WHO WILL BE TO BE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE?

I. IS THE LAKE OF FIRE A LITERAL LAKE?

1. If we take the Bible literally we must conclude that the lake of fire is a literal lake. For example, did God rain literal fire and brimstone down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah?
2. Yes, He certainly did. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is referred to nearly 50 times in the Bible – by Moses, by the prophets Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Amos, and Zephaniah.
3. It is mentioned several times by Jesus, by the apostle Paul, by Peter, by Jude, and by John in the book of Revelation.
4. Second Peter 2:6 says, “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”
5. That is literal fire and brimstone turning literal cities into a literal pile of ashes.

6. I believe with all my heart that the lake of fire is a literal lake of fire. Revelation 19:20 tells us that the beast (antichrist) and the false prophet will both be cast alive into “a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”
7. Then Revelation 20:10 says, “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.”
8. One thousand years transpire between Revelation 19:20 and Revelation 20:10 (cf. Rev. 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), and we are told the beast and the false prophet are still being tormented in the lake of fire.
9. CT Schwarze was a professor at NYU many years ago. Back in 1938, he wrote an interesting article about the lake of fire for a theological journal.
10. He wrote: “The word *lake* must connote a body of matter having liquid form. Therefore, if Scripture is truth, this eternal fire must be in liquid form” (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, cited by J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*).
11. Note that although Dr. Schwarze was a scientist, he acknowledged that “Scripture is truth.” Jesus said in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
12. Romans 3:4 says, “Let God be true, but every man a liar.”
13. Let me continue with more of CT Schwarze’s interesting statements. He refers to the enormous density of the midget or white dwarf stars. He says, “Most people know the sun, our nearest star is rather hot...there is general agreement that the temperature at or near the center of stars is between 25 million and 30 million degrees Fahrenheit...at such temperatures, much can happen, like the bursting of atoms, which helps to explain the phenomenon of the white dwarf.”
14. CT Schwarze goes on to point out that at such high temperatures all matter would be in the form of gas...”in a white dwarf the pressure is so great that gasses become compressed to the consistency of a liquid although they may still respond to the characteristics of a gas.”
15. Continuing on this theme, he says, “Before such a star could cool off and generally become dark it would have to expand to normal proportions. That is, it would have to get to be more than 5,000 times its present size. Here is the difficulty. Such expansion would cause enormous heat which, in turn, would absolutely keep the star compressed, so that, *insofar as astronomers and physicists know, the midget stars can never cool off!*...The white dwarf, to all intents, *can never burn out.*”
16. Dr. Schwarze concludes by saying, “May I summarize to show that the Bible, God’s Word, is scientifically accurate? We find, first, an eternal fire which cannot burn out. Being of a liquid consistency it is, secondly, a lake of fire. In the third place, it cannot be quenched, for any quenching material, such as water, would immediately have its atoms stripped of

electrons and be packed in with the rest. In the fourth place, since astronomers have been, and still are, studying this strange phenomenon, it is only too evident that the lake of fire *has been prepared* and is now ready.”

17. Dr. Schwarze is speaking from a scientific perspective, and of course, his conclusions are thoroughly Biblical. He says the lake of fire is an eternal fire which cannot burn out, and the fire cannot be quenched. Over and over again the Word of God tells us hell is eternal. Our Lord said in Matthew 25:41, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”
18. Our Lord said five times in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6 that the fire in hell shall never be quenched.
19. CT Schwarze says, “It is only too evident that the lake of fire *has been prepared* and is now ready.” That is precisely what Jesus said in Matthew 25:41 – “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”
20. Therefore, we can be certain the lake of fire is a literal lake of fire.
21. Our Lord said in John 14:1-3, that He has prepared a place for those who believe in Him. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me” (14:1).
22. Therefore, the saved will live for all eternity in a place prepared for us by Christ, while the unsaved will spend eternity in a place prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HELL AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

1. The terms are often used interchangeably, but there is a distinction. We preachers often say, “Sinners will spend eternity in hell,” but strictly speaking they will spend eternity in the lake of fire (cf. Rev. 20:14, 15; 21:8).
2. Hell is below us, but the lake of fire is somewhere out in space.
3. The Lord said to the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:9, “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee.”
4. In this same chapter, the Lord says to Lucifer, “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isa. 14:15).
5. Ezekiel 31:17 refers to sinners descending “down into hell.”
6. Deuteronomy 32:22 says, “For a fire is burned in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell...”
7. In Psalm 86:13, David says, “Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.”
8. Job 11:8 says the wisdom of God is “as high as heaven” and “deeper than hell.”
9. Proverbs 9:18 refers to “the depths of hell.”
10. Psalm 55:15 says, “let them (sinners) go down quick into hell.”

11. Our Lord said, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell” (Matt. 11:23).
12. Second Peter 2:4 says, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell...”
13. Hell is the temporary abode or holding place of the disembodied souls of the dead. It is not the grave as the religious cults teach.
14. In Luke 16:23, our Lord said the rich man was “in torment,” but there is no torment in the grave. But there is plenty of torment in hell (cf. Rev. 14:10, 11).
15. At the Great White Throne Judgment, sinners will be judged and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).
16. When criminals are booked in NYC they are sent over to Rikers’ Island while they wait for their trial to begin.
17. There are also some criminals there who have been convicted and sentenced to one year or less of jail time on Rikers’ Island.
18. There are about 20,000 inmates crammed into the jail cells on Rikers’ Island.
19. After they are convicted in court, the judge sends most of them upstate to a much larger state penitentiary.
20. Hell is like sitting in a jail cell in Rikers’ Island but much, much worse. The lake of fire is like the state penitentiary, but much, much worse – and eternal – there is no parole and no chance of escape.

III. WHO WILL BE TO BE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE?

1. Revelation 21:8 tells us who will be cast into the lake of fire (cf. 21:27; 22:14, 15). The “fearful” (21:8) are those who are too cowardly to confess faith in Christ.
2. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”
3. Our Lord said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32, 33).
4. Some people misunderstand Revelation 21:8. The Bible teaches that those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be saved (cf. John 3) – the “unbelieving” will be cast into the lake of fire.
5. Just recently, one of our church members referred to the fact that the JW cult and the SDA cult are closely linked. Charles T. Russell (1852-1916) founded the Jehovah’s Witnesses movement. He was brought up Presbyterian, but as a teenager he rejected Presbyterianism and joined a liberal Congregational Church. But soon he left that church as well. Russell

denied the deity of Christ and the biblical teachings on hell and eternal punishment.

6. Russell had no formal Bible training, but borrowed various teachings that were popular at the time, such as the SDA's denial of hell.
7. But the SDA "annihilation" doctrine, and the RC doctrine of purgatory, and the JW teaching that hell is simply the grave, and all these other theories which deny a literal lake of fire contradict the plain teachings of Scripture (cf. Hebrews 9:27; Rev. 21:8).
8. The unsaved are pictured in Revelation 21:8 in their principal characteristics. Some Christians have been guilty of these sins but they repented and got right with God.
9. But no true Christian can be categorized by this terrible list of sins (Rev. 21:8). There are no Christian unbelievers or Christian murderers or Christian idolaters, etc. There are no "abominable" Christians (Rev. 21:8). "Abomination" means God hates the sin (witchcraft, idolatry, homosexuality, pride, lying, etc.).

CONCLUSION:

1. There is a Hollywood actor named Patrick Swayze, who has recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He has been interviewed by the press regarding his fears as he faces imminent death.
2. "You can bet that I'm going through Hell," the 56-year-old actor said in his TV interview. Mr. Swayze is mistaken about that! He is not going through hell (yet). Hell is far worse than what he is going through. Perhaps the Lord is giving him a warning about what hell will be like if he does not repent. But he is not in "hell" now.
3. Mr. Swayze said, "There's a lot of fear here... Yeah, I'm scared. Yeah, I'm angry. Yeah, I'm asking, 'Why me?' I tried to have champagne, and it would be like pouring acid, you know, on an open wound."
4. (There is no champagne in hell so sinners may as well drink it now.)
5. The actor told interviewer Barbara Walters his illness has made him question the possibility of an afterlife. Well, that's good. Maybe he will read the Bible and get saved before it is too late.
6. He said, "I don't know what's on the other side." The only way to know what's on the other side is to read God's Word.
7. If Mr. Swayze reads the Bible, he will discover there is a word found there often – "whosoever." "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

8. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

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