

The “Second Death” and the “Lake of Fire”

The study of hell would be incomplete without some basic understanding of the terms “*Second Death*” and the “*Lake of Fire*” as they are presented in the Book of Revelation. The following Scripture verses concerning these two terms are listed as follows:

The “Second Death”

Revelation 2:11: *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.*

Revelation 20:6: *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:14-15: *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 21:8: *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

The “Lake of Fire”

Revelation 19: 20-21: *But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

Revelation 20:10: *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

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Revelation 21:8: *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

The Layman's Bible Encyclopedia defines the terms “death” and “fire” as follows:

“Death is the cessation or absence of life, viewed in the Scriptures as an evil brought on by sin. Just as the Bible has to do with two kinds of life—natural and spiritual—it also deals with two kinds of death—natural and spiritual. Natural dead are those from whom the breath of life has passed; spiritual dead are those from whom the breath of the spirit has passed—those steeped in wickedness and sin. The final state of the spiritually dead is spoken of as the ‘*second death*.’

“Fire is mentioned in many ways in the Bible, since the Hebrews used it for various purposes, for warmth, and in their worship of God. Fire was not to be kindled on the Sabbath, and for burnt offerings, none could be used except that taken from the altar fire. There are a number of instances in which fire accompanied divine appearances. The Bible is particularly explicit regarding the use of fire as an instrument of God's judgment and as a means of everlasting punishment.”

The Matthew Henry Commentary has these words to say concerning “the second death” and “the lake of fire:”

“All those who have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, shall be condemned with their infernal accomplices, cast with them into the lake of fire, as *not being entitled to eternal life*, according to the rules of life laid down in the Scripture; but those whose names are written in that book (that is, those that are justified and acquitted by the gospel) shall then be justified and acquitted by the Judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for *these are all destroyed together*.”

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“The beast and the false prophet, the leaders of the army, are taken prisoners, both he who led them by power and he who led them by policy and falsehood; these are taken and cast into the burning lake, made incapable of molesting the church of God any more; and their followers, whether officers or common soldiers, are *given up to military execution*, and made a feast for the fowls of heaven. Though the divine vengeance will chiefly fall upon the beast, and the false prophet, yet it will be no excuse to those who would fight under their banner that they only followed their leaders and obeyed their command; since they would fight for them, *they must fall and perish with them.*”

It would seem to be appropriate at this time to read *The Matthew Henry Commentary’s* comments concerning the first four Scripture verses listed on page one with regard to the term, “*Second Death.*”

Revelation 2:11: *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.*

The Matthew Henry Commentary has this to say about the second death in Revelation 2:11:

“There is not only a first, but a second death. This second death is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the *agonies* of it and as it is *eternal death.*”

Revelation 20:6: *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

The Matthew Henry Commentary has this to say about the second death in Revelation 20:6:

“We know something about what the first death is, and it is awful; but we know not what the second death is. It must be much more dreadful; it is the *death of the soul*, eternal separation from God.”

Revelation 20:14-15: *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

The Matthew Henry Commentary has this to say about the second death in Revelation 20:14-15:

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“Those acquitted by the gospel, shall be justified and acquitted by the Judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for *these are all destroyed together*. This is the second death; it is the final separation of the sinners from God.”

Revelation 21:8: *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*”

The Matthew Henry Commentary has this to say about the second death in Revelation 21:8:

“The wicked could not burn at a stake for Christ, but they must burn in hell for sin. They must die another death after their natural death: the agonies and terrors of the first death will consign them over to the far greater terrors and agonies of *eternal death*.”

It would appear that Matthew Henry believed the ‘*second death*’ to be the final penalty for sin, the total and *eternal elimination* of evil powers and sin in God’s creation. But if Matthew Henry is correct, what is the need for an “*eternal fire*” spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 18:8 and 25:41? (See verses below.)

Matthew 18:8: *If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.*

Matthew 25:41: *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

The following five articles are being presented as having possible answers to this very important question about the need for an eternal fire:

Article Number 1 is taken from the www.hell-know.net website, and is broken down into the following categories:

Life and Death: The Two Polar Opposites

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‘The apostle Paul summed up the whole matter of people’s reward for sin when he wrote:’

Romans 6:21-23: What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“Can anything be clearer than this text? The wages for sin is shown to be death, and eternal life is stated to be a gift from God, not something people already have. This is consistently expressed from Genesis to Revelation as demonstrated as follows:”

Proverbs 11:19: The truly righteous man attains life, but he who pursues evil goes to his death.

Matthew 7:13-14: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 8:13-14: For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Galatians 6:8: The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

“All of these passages clearly describe two separate destinies of the righteous and the unrighteous. The ‘righteous’ are people who are in-right-standing with God because they’ve accepted His sacrifice for their sins. The ‘unrighteous’ are those who are not in-right-standing with their Creator because they’ve rejected His offer of salvation. The former will inherit eternal life, whereas the latter will reap the wages of sin and be destroyed.

“Yet those who adhere to the eternal torture doctrine mysteriously don’t accept this blatantly clear Biblical truth. They don’t believe that the two polar opposites

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are life and death; they believe the two polar opposites are eternal life in heavenly bliss and eternal life in burning torment.”

Eternal Life and Immortality—Only Available Through the Gospel

“The offer to receive eternal life as opposed to suffering everlasting destruction is what the Gospel is all about. We see this plainly expressed in the following passage:”

2nd Timothy 1:9-10: *This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

“Notice that life and immortality *are only available through the gospel* which is the “good news” summed up in this famous passage:”

John 3: 16: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

“Note, once again, what is clearly being contrasted in these passages: In John 3:16, *perish* is contrasted with the gift of *eternal life*, while in 2nd Timothy 1:9-10, *death* is contrasted with *immortality* and *life*, which are said to be made available through the gospel. If the eternal torture doctrine were true, wouldn’t these verses be contrasting *eternal life* with *eternal life being tortured in fiery torment* instead of *perish* and *death*?

“Notice what John the Baptist declared would happen to those who would reject the gospel:

John 3:36: *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

“This passage could not be any plainer. Those who reject the Son *will not see life*. God’s word is absolute, and this is an absolute statement. Such people will be justly-but-mercifully be put to death, absolute death, for this is the wages of their actions. But our Creator doesn’t want anyone to perish like this; He has provided a way to eternal life through his Son, Jesus Christ.”

Jesus Taught Everlasting Destruction

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“Didn’t Jesus preach that those who reject the gospel and refuse to repent will suffer never-ending torment in hell? Let’s examine what Jesus taught on the issue starting with a statement we’ve already looked at:”

Matthew 7:13-14: *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

“How clearer could Jesus possibly be here? Destruction is the fate that awaits the ‘many’ that are thrown into the lake of fire, not perpetual underlying torture in flames of torment. Again, the destruction of ‘many’ is in contrast to ‘life’ that will be granted to the ‘few.’

“Look at Jesus’ response to being told of an incident where the Galileans were having people killed while offering sacrifices in the temple:

Luke 13:2-5: *Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

“This mirrors Jesus’ statement in John 3:16 regarding the fact that those who believe in Him “...shall not ‘perish’ but have ‘eternal life.’ ‘Perish’ in both of these texts is not referring to the death we all face at the end of this present earthly life. No, Jesus is obviously referring here to a perishing that those who believe in Him will not have to suffer—the second death, which takes place on the day-of-judgment when the damned are cast into the lake of fire.

“In Matthew, Jesus solemnly declared what would happen to people when they experienced this “second death:”

Matthew 10:28: *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy the soul and body in hell.*

“In this verse, Jesus is telling us explicitly what God will do to unrepentant sinful people on the day-of-judgment: He will destroy both soul and body in the lake of fire, His chosen instrument of destruction. Although Jesus is dealing specifically here with the subject of the “second death,” He says absolutely nothing about the unsaved spending eternity in undying conscious torment.

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“God is going to unenthusiastically issue out the wages of sin and justly destroy the unrighteous, not sadistically torture them forever as Scripture clearly states:”

James 4:12: *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.*

“You see, God is going to do one of two things with people: He’s either going to save them, that is, grant eternal life to those who respond favorably to His love and gracious gift of life, or He’s going to justly—but mercifully destroy them.

“This fact that God is either going to save or destroy people based on their freewill decision to accept or reject the gospel is clearly illustrated in this passage from the apostle Paul in Hebrews:”

Hebrews 10:39: *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

“Those who believe will be saved from the second death and granted eternal life, while those who do not believe will be destroyed, both soul and body, in the lake of fire. It’s that simple!”

Article Number 2 is written by Angel Manuel Rodriguez, from the Biblical Research Institute, speaking on this subject in his article, *Surviving the Second Death*:

“It’s impossible to for us to understand fully what the ‘*second death*’ entails, because the only one who went through it and came back was Jesus. Therefore, we must carefully approach this subject, beginning by examining the Biblical passages in which the phrase ‘*second death*’ is used and then exploring Jesus’ experience.

“The phrase ‘*second death*’ is found only four times in the Bible—Rev. 2:11; 20:6; 20:14 & 21:8—but these few verses reveal several important things:”

Revelation 2:11: *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.*

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Revelation 20:6: *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:14: *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.*

Revelation 21:8: *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

“First, the ‘*second death*’ is God’s *instrument* in the *eradication* of sin, sinners, Satan, and death from the universe. The ‘*second death*’ is fundamentally different from natural death. Sin and death entered into the world together, and they will be extinguished from it together, The ‘*second death*’ is the final penalty for sin, the total and *eternal elimination* of evil powers and sin in God’s creation (See Rev. 20:10; 20:14 & 21:8 below).”

Revelation 20:10: *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Revelation 20:14: *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.*

Revelation 21:8: *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

“Second, the ‘*second death*’ is a *process* that brings sinful life to an end. Sinners will be completely aware of the fact that they are going through that which will separate them from God forever. This process culminates in the inevitable and inescapable cessation of the life of unrepentant sinners. It stops its work only when nothing is left of sinners and sin (See Rev. 20:10 & 20:14 above).

“Third, the ‘*second death*’ is *characterized* by pain. It harms or hurts those who experience it (See Rev. 2:11). This same verb for ‘harms’ or ‘hurts’ is used to describe physical harm in Luke 10:19 and spiritual harm in Colossians 3:25. It is a

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synonym for torment in Rev. 9:3-5 & 20:10. Those who are under the full control of evil are tormented by it in Matthew 8:29. Therefore, one could suggest that the ‘*second death*’ is experienced as both physical and spiritual anguish, or agony—indescribable pain (See verses below).”

Revelation 2:11: *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.*

Luke 10:19: *I have given you [the appointed seventy-two other disciples] authority to trample on snakes and scorpions [evil spirits] and to overcome all the power of the enemy [Satan]; nothing will harm you.*

Colossians 3:25: *Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*

Revelation 9:3-5: *And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man.*

Revelation 20:10: *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Matthew 8:29: *When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him [Jesus]. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"*

“Finally, the ‘*second death*’ is *legally right*. This death has no power or authority over the righteous (See Rev. 20:6). But it does have a claim against the wicked. It isn’t an expression of divine arbitrariness, but an expression of a legal penalty or retribution (See Colossians 3:25). It serves to reveal the justice of God’s judgments (See Rev. 19:1-3). (See Verses below):”

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Revelation 20:6: *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Colossians 3:25: *Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*

Revelation 19:1-3: *After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” And again they shouted: Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”*

“Jesus experiencing the ‘second death’ would include everything stated above and more as follows:

“First, Jesus underwent excruciating physical and emotional pain. As Jesus approached the cross, He began to be sorrowful and troubled (See Matthew 26: 37-39). That terminology expressed a grief, sadness, and anxiety so intense that it threatened His existence. In Gethsemane the pain was almost unbearable, and Christ’s body reflected His spiritual agony as His perspiration appeared as drops of blood that fell to the ground. He would have died were it not for an angel sent from heaven who strengthened Him (See Luke 22:43-44 & Hebrews 5:7-9). (See Verses below):”

Matthew 26:37-39: *He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”*

Luke 22:43-44: *An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Hebrews 5:7-9: *During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and,*

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once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

“Second, Jesus experienced the ‘*second death*’ because it was the right penalty for the sins of the world. He bore the sins of the human race as its substitute (See Mark 10:45). Here we reach the limits of this mystery. Christ experienced the ‘*second death*’ by assuming responsibility for our sin and receiving our penalty (See 2nd Cor. 5:21).”

Mark 10:45: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

2nd Corinthians 5:21: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

“Third, Jesus experienced the anguish of His separation from the Father in the most real form (See Matthew 27:45-46). He confronted the pain of God’s abandonment. The anguish of His soul had a spiritual component in that He was the rejected one. This is unquestionably the ‘*second death*.’ Of course, Christ came back to life. He was resurrected because there was no sin in Him and the tomb could not retain Him. For believers, Jesus’ resurrection is an expression of God’s love. For the wicked, going into eternal oblivion may well be an expression of that same love. The ‘*second death*’ marks the extermination of sin and death from the universe. Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sin, our destiny is communion with God and the Lamb throughout eternity, achieved for all who believe in him through His death and resurrection.”

Matthew 27:45-46: *From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi,^[a] lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

At this point the question needs to be asked. If the ‘*second death*’ is God’s *instrument* in the eradication of sin, sinners, Satan, and death from the universe, as Rodriguez states, then why is there a need for the wicked to be doomed to burn eternally and consciously after they are all eradicated?

Article Number 3: Some insight concerning this question is taken from the *Bible Study Collection* found on the mcdonaldroad.org website as follows:

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“Some believe that the wicked are doomed to burn consciously forever because the Bible speaks of ‘eternal fire.’ Notice that Jude 7 is a Scripture verse that contains the expression, ‘eternal fire.’”

Jude 7: ...Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

“Are Sodom and Gomorrah still burning today? Listen to the words of the apostle Peter in 2nd Peter 2:6:”

2nd Peter 2:6: ...if he [God] condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly...

“Sodom and Gomorrah are not burning today. Their destruction by fire was intended to be an example for all mankind of what will ultimately happen to all the wicked of all ages; not eternal torture, but eternal extinction. The fire is said to be eternal because it is the ultimate expression of God’s hatred of sin. God will always hate sin and its effect on His creation. If He were to ever change His attitude toward sin in the future, then He would be unjust for applying stiff penalties for it now. But His attitude will never change. Malachi 3:6: tells us, “***I the LORD do not change.***” The fire of God’s wrath will always burn against sin. Right will always be right, and wrong will always be wrong. Love and mercy will always find approval in the sight of God, and selfishness will always be condemned.

“Revelation 20:4-9 gives the order of events to take place in the universe from the second coming of Christ till the destruction of the wicked. These two events are separated by the millennium; 1,000 years of peace, during which the righteous are in heaven with Christ. Only after this period is over will the wicked be subjected to the ‘lake of fire.’ None are burning today.”

Revelation 20:4-9: I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The

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second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

“The apostle Peter tells us in 2nd Peter 3:3-7 how this will come about:”

2nd Peter 3:3-7: First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

“There is a day of final reckoning. The ‘second death’ will be a reality. But beyond that, we can share the hope of Peter in 2nd Peter 3:10-13:”

2nd Peter 3:10-13: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

“How does God view this ‘second death?’ 2nd Peter 3:9 makes it very clear:”

2nd Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

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Article Number 4: The following excerpts on this subject are taken from the www.auburn.edu website:

“The expressions “*Lake of Fire*” and “*Second Death*,” occurring only in the book of Revelation, represent two of the least understood expressions in Scripture. In Revelation, the “*Lake of Fire*” is represented as an agent in destroying, as well as punishing (See Revelation 20:14-15 & 19: 20-21). Since *Death and Hades* lack perception, consciousness or animation, they are not suitable subjects for punishment. Their *Second Death*” represents them being eternally destroyed.”

Revelation 20:14-15: *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 19: 20-21: *But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them [their followers] were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

“The beast and the false prophet, however, both having perception, consciousness and animation, will face the punishment of hell by bodily being thrown “*alive*” into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Their being cast into a lake of fire can only suggest their destruction, a final extinction of all these and other foes to God’s ultimate plan and to human happiness.”

After reading the Biblical comments of Jesus, the apostles John, Paul, James and Peter, and John the Baptist, it would seem that the Bible is teaching that by using words such as “hurt,” “burning,” “suffering,” “torture” and “agony,” that hell will be a place of punishment, and, by using words such as ‘perish,’ ‘die,’ ‘death,’ the ‘second death,’ ‘killed,’ ‘destroy’ and ‘destruction,’ that Hell must also be a place of annihilation.

And, despite having the valued opinions of Matthew Henry and the authors of Articles 1 through 4 in this study, have we overlooked the fact that there is an elephant in the room? That elephant comes in the form of three Scripture verses

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that are found in Matthew and Revelation that seem to disagree with that teaching:

Matthew 25:41: *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

Matthew 25:46: *“Then they [those on the left] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

Revelation 20:10: *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Note that The NIV Study Bible makes this comment concerning Revelation 20:10: “Revelation offers no support for the doctrine of annihilation.”

Note that this comment does not say that the Bible offers no support for the doctrine of annihilation.

Article Number 5: The following edited excerpts are taken from an article entitled *Eternal Fire and Punishment for the Wicked?*, written by Francis D. Nichol on the hell/truth.com website:

“The Bible speaks of ‘*eternal punishment*’ for the wicked in Matthew 25:46, of ‘*eternal fire*’ in which they will burn in Matthew 25:41, and of their being ‘*tormented day and night forever and ever*’ in Revelation 20:10. Doesn’t this prove the immortality of the soul?

“The words translated ‘*eternal*’ and ‘*forever*’ do not *necessarily* mean ‘*never ending*.’ These terms when found in the New Testament, come from the Greek noun ‘aion’ or the adjective ‘aionios’ derived from this noun. [The tentmaker.org website says that translations of ‘aion’ in well-known English versions can mean age, eon, time, period, today, the future, universe, course, world, worldly, world without end, since the world began, from the beginning of the world, ever, evermore, for ever and ever, end of my days, eternal, everlasting, always, permanently, constantly, of old, ancient times, and others—some forty different translations]. Therefore when we examine various Scripture texts containing the

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word ‘aion,’ we discover at once how impossible it would be to attempt to make this Greek root *always* mean an endless period.

“For example, we read in Matthew 13:37- 39:

He [Jesus] answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

“The word ‘aion’ that was translated to mean ‘*eternal*’ and ‘*forever*’ in Matthew 25:46, Matthew 25:41, and Revelation 20:10, is translated to mean ‘*the end of the age*’ in Matthew 13:37-39. It should be noted that the King James Version of the Bible for Matthew 13: 37-39 translated ‘aion’ as ‘*the end of the world.*’ Regardless of which one is used, ‘*the end of the age*’ or ‘*the end of the world,*’ both as aspects of time, the question needs to be asked, ‘How can something end if it is ‘*eternal*’ and ‘*forever*?’

“A second example occurs in Colossians 1:25-27:”

I [the apostle Paul] have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

“Again, the word ‘aion’ that was translated to mean ‘*eternal*’ and ‘*forever*’ in Matthew 25:46, Matthew 25:41, and Revelation 20:10, is translated to mean ‘for ages and generations’ in Colossians 1:25-27.

“A third example occurs in Hebrews 5:1-6:”

Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I

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have become your Father. And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

“In this instance, the word ‘aion’ that was translated to mean ‘*eternal*’ and ‘*forever*’ in Matthew 25:46, Matthew 25:41, and Revelation 20:10, is also translated to mean ‘*forever*’ in Hebrews 25:5-6. But will Jesus be a priest forever? Hebrews 5:1 demonstrates that the work of a priest is to deal with sin. Here, ‘*forever*,’ or ‘aion,’ clearly means ‘*this present age*’ for all theologians agree that Christ’s work as a priest comes to an end when sin has been blotted out.”

The author of this article proceeds to list 12 other Biblical examples that demonstrate questionable translations of ‘aion’ and or ‘aionios’ in the Bible giving warning that the value of ‘aion’ and ‘aionios’ *must* be determined by “the nature of the subject involved. Thus by the acid test of actual usage, we may discover that in a number of cases of ‘aion’ and ‘aionios’ have a very limited time value.

“The Bible nowhere declares that the soul is immortal. On the contrary, the Bible uses words that clearly convey the thought that, in the case of the wicked, the ‘nature of the subject’ demands the conclusion that a complete and speedy annihilation will take place. The wicked are described as ‘chaff,’ ‘stubble,’ ‘wax,’ ‘fat,’ etc. [See page 17 for a sample of Bible verses that contain those words.] We are told explicitly that the fire ‘shall burn them up,’ and ‘shall leave them neither root nor branch,’ so that ‘they shall be ‘ashes under the souls of the feet of the righteous.’

“Now, while we can thus correctly conclude that the ‘*everlasting*’ torment of the wicked is but a limited period, we can, at the same time, logically conclude that the ‘*everlasting*’ reward of the righteous is an unending one.”

Is there enough information provided in this study to substantiate the premise that there will be punishment for those consigned to hell, but that it will not be eternal punishment or is an elephant still in the room?

The following is a list of Bible verses that contain the words, *Ashes, Chaff, Stubble, Wax and Fat*, mentioned on page 16, of which some are presented to give a flavor of what’s they represent:

Ashes:

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Malachi 4:3 —*“Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,” says the Lord Almighty.*

2nd Peter 2:6 (See page 11)

Chaff:

Psalms 1:4

Psalms 35:5

Isaiah 5:24—*Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up the straw and as dry grass [chaff] sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like the dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty.*

Isaiah 29:5

Daniel 2:35

Matthew 3:12—*“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

Stubble:

Malachi 4:1 —*“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day is coming.” says the Lord Almighty.*

Wax:

Psalms 22:14

Psalms 68:2—*As smoke is blown away by the wind, may you blow them away; as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God.*

Psalms 97:5

Micah 1:4

Fat:

Psalms 17:9, 10, 13—*From the wicked that oppress me [David], from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. They are enclosed in their own fat; with their mouth they speak proudly...Arise, O Lord, cast him down; deliver my soul from the wicked. [KJV]*