

The Never-Ending Ascending Smoke

How It All Ends

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Bible Text: Revelation 14:9-14; Psalm 75

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Psalm 75, “Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare. When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.” Look here: “The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:.” You know right away are we speaking poetically or are we speaking prophetically and I think the answer is both. I think that David is describing something that was occurring in his day and he is being quite literally with something that will occur in the future and we see that through fulfillments in the time of Jesus.

Look at verse 4, “I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” Verse 8, “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.” So, God has a cup and it’s filled up with his wrath and the wicked in the earth will drink it, drink the cup of his wrath.

We’re going to look at two places in the book of Isaiah and two places in the book of Matthew and then we’ll end up in Revelation. So, Isaiah 28, I want to show you a Scripture passage that will show up again in the book of Revelation. Look in verse 16, “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” See verse 18, “your covenant with death shall be disannulled.” That is a reference to the seven year peace treaty that is made between Israel and a false Christ. He’s talking about a covenant that will be disannulled. Do you remember when Daniel 9 tells us that half way through that seven year peace treaty that is coming soon, half way through that the beast, or the prince that shall come, disannuls it, or breaks the covenant. Do you remember that?

“Your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take

you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.” Look here, verse 20, look how he describes the judgment of the Lord, “For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” So, let’s just say this two ways: in the day of judgment for many people, they will be like a man on a bed that is too short trying to cover with a sheet that is too narrow. No comfort and no covering in the day of judgment for those who have made a covenant with death and hell.

Now, this is just an amazing parallel because in Revelation 20, you see death and hell are mentioned in a pair and they are cast into the Lake of Fire and you see that there is judgments and covenants mentioned in the book of Revelation. Well, here he says that there is no rest for those who are involved with that judgment. We’re going to need to remember that in a little bit. No rest.

Look in chapter 34 of Isaiah, verse 8. We’re talking about “a day of the LORD’S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.” Do you see that Zion keeps showing up here? Remember Revelation 14:1, we see the Lamb standing on Zion? So, we’re seeing some parallels here. “The streams thereof,” so, who is he talking to anyway? Well, context, we have to look and we have to see who is he talking to. Well, you could look in verse 6 and see that he is upset about things happening in Bozrah and Idumea and there are others that we’re going to see come up here shortly and he talks about them, particularly their geography on the world map, he says in verse 9, “the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day.” Alright, so we have this idea of brimstone and burning night and day and, “the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.” Now, you need to remember what we just read because it’s going to come up again in Revelation 14. You have the threatening of judgment through fire and brimstone and smoke of that fire and brimstone ascending forever from generation to generation.

Matthew 25 and you see in verse 31, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” Alright, so we have the Son of man coming in his glory with his angels. Everyone with me? “Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” And maybe you know this story, this is something you could read in your devotions tomorrow morning if you want to, but what I do want you to see is that he deals with the goats. And we’ll look at the sheep first, verse 33, “he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous,” or the sheep, “answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and

came unto thee?" Before you think that Jesus is preaching to them salvation by works here, let's remember the context is that this occurs when he returns. So, there is something specific about the context that helps us to understand that you don't get to go to heaven by feeding the hungry. Alright? There is something particularly contextually relevant with this passage. Verse 40, "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand," the goats, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is significant given Revelation 14.

I'm showing you everything on purpose here. There is a method to the madness. Remember these elements we've discussed. You have the Son of man coming with his angels in glory, sitting on his throne, separating sheep from goats and he puts the goats in everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. That's pretty significant. We're going to want to remember that.

Now look at chapter 26 of Matthew and when you look at verse 26 you should see and you should think, "Ah, the Lord's Supper." Then when you see verse 36 of Matthew 26, what are you thinking? Look at it, take a glance and what are you thinking? What's about to happen? Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Look at verse 36, "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee," James and John, "and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Okay, a little help from you, please. Psalm 75, what was the cup of God? His wrath. So, Jesus here is concerned not about nails in his hands, not about nails in his feet, not about a crown of thorns because he knew what was ahead, friends. When I'm saying concerned I'm not saying he was looking forward to receiving all that physical pain. I'm saying that what he's talking about here, "let this cup pass from me," is the wrath of God that he would experience on the cross. That was really, dear friends, when the sin atonement was made, when the sin offering was made was when he experienced the wrath of God. So, Jesus is in a very mysterious sort of way talking with his Father about whether or not it's possible for the wrath of God to be satisfied through some way other than the Son of God drinking it on the cross.

Revelation 4. I want to remind you that Revelation 1, you're going to help me here, you're going to help me reteach this every time, Revelation 1, Jesus presents himself to John in the form of the Son of Man. Revelation 2 and 3 is about the letters to the seven churches. Here we are in Revelation 4, he says that, "he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." Verse 4, he recognizes 24 elders and then he talks about four, beasts/creatures. And then I want you to notice verse 8, the four creatures, the four beasts, that each of them, "six wings about him and they were full of eyes within and they did not rest day or night." What were they doing instead of resting? They were worshipping, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

Here we are at chapter 14. We're going to start reading in verse 9. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand." So, John just got done saying that if your name is not in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, you will worship the beast. Everyone with me? And if you worship the beast, chapter 14:10, "the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." In other words, very simply, he is ticked off.

You have to understand, John is not interested in helping us feel like Jesus is loving, a sheep-toting hippy. He's not interested in that. He wants you to understand that he is very angry. An angry Lamb. That's almost paradoxical, isn't it? The sheep are just stupid and now I understand why we are called them, but the Lamb, who ever thought about an angry lamb? And that's why in chapter 5 he is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah but he looks like a lamb that's just been slaughtered. It's a paradox and one day he's coming back not as a lamb but as a lion and he is angry.

And who is he going to be dumping his wrath on? Those who take the mark. "And he shall be," those who take the mark, will drink of the wrath of God and they will be "tormented with fire and brimstone," look here, "in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." In other words, please understand, we need to stop apologizing for God. It is completely appropriate for him to punish sin. God says, "Don't be embarrassed for me. The smoke of their torment will come up before me and the Father forever."

This apparently pleases the Lord because when we talk about things happening in the presence of God and of the Lamb, that is something that is pleasing to him. In chapter 8 we find the prayers of the saints being offered up as incense before the Lord. Do you understand the parallel that John is drawing here? It is as pleasing for sinners who have rejected the Lamb, listen carefully, it is as pleasing to a holy and a righteous God and his Lamb, it is as pleasing to them to observe the torment of the wicked as it is to receive the prayers of the saints. It's really tempting for us to redefine God and re-explain God and apologize for God but we're commanded here to understand and believe and trust and appreciate this aspect of God, that God is somehow pleased in his economy to design eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels and somehow people are put there and the smoke of their torment arises before God and his Lamb forever.

Remember that man with the bed too short and the sheet too narrow? Isaiah 28? You can write that in the margin right next to it. "Who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." Remember, John is a masterful writer and why is he masterful? Because the Holy Spirit is guiding him, right? They don't rest at all day or night forever. I'm just saying that some of us have endured great affliction for years and can you imagine that keeping you sleepless for eons.

So, I've thought through Revelation 14, I've thought through Isaiah 34 and I think: does this prove that the Lake of Fire is forever and ever and ever and ever without end? Does

it? I suppose someone could play mental gymnastics with this whole thing of “is the Lake of Fire never-ending” and I’m not sure that you can prove that it last forever out of Isaiah 34. I’m not even sure you can say that it last forever here but this, I can say, in the book of Revelation it does seem to say it. It’s not just the smoke of the torment that lasts forever, it is the torment itself. Why do I say that? Matthew said, “Depart from me to everlasting fire prepared for,” who? “The devil and his angels.” We saw that. So, you could write that right next to Revelation 14:10 if you wanted to, Matthew 25:41.

Let me show you three different passages later in the book of Revelation that lead me to believe that despite what I would like to think, I have to believe the Bible and I believe every word of the Scripture. I know most of you do, too. As a matter of fact, it’s so much most that I don’t know a single one in here that doesn’t. Let’s look at chapter 19 and let’s look forward to the end of the tribulation period. Chapter 19 and then we’ll be done for the day. Verse 20, we have the two beasts: the first one is empowered by the dragon and the second one, the false prophet. Verse 20, “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” So, quickly, if I could just remind you, we are over here somewhere, I got that. Then we have a seven year tribulation period right here. And then we have, I think I’ve said, 75 days and for discussion purposes and brevity we’ll keep it there. We have a 1,000 millennium right here.

Now, Revelation 19 talks about what happens right here when the Lord descends, so we have the beast and the false prophet and they’re not cast into Hades where people go without their bodies if they died today without Jesus, they’re not thrown there. They are thrown into Gehenna. Gehenna is the Lake of Fire, Matthew 10:28, “Fear not those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear them who can kill both body and soul in Gehenna.” Both words are translated “hell” in the King James Bible but they are two different places. One is where people go now when their bodies go in the grave if they’re unsaved, the other is where they go after their body comes out of the grave and they stand before God in judgment. Here we have the beast and the false prophet.

Look at chapter 20: they are cast into the Lake of Fire. The beast and false prophet into the Lake of Fire. Chapter 20, we see this 1,000 year millennial reign. Look at verse 1-6 and you see 1,000 years is mentioned six times. Then chapter 20, verses 11-15 we see that Hades gives up its dead and there’s this Great White Throne Judgment. Yes? Everyone see that? But before that, after the thousand years, look at verse 7, “And when the thousand years was done,” so over here. And then we see in verse 10, “the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are.” So: beast and false prophet, seven year tribulation period, they are thrown into the Lake of Fire, Revelation 20:10, you have Satan being cast into the Lake of Fire, a thousand years later, the beast and the false prophet are still in the Lake of Fire. Do you see that? I’m not happy about it other than, “Well, they should be there forever.” I got that, but remember the ramifications of chapter 14, that same fire and brimstone that was prepared for the devil and his angels are where people go when they worship the beast.

So, last verse, chapter 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 burneth with fire and brimstone.” Fire and brimstone in Revelation 14, right? Fire and brimstone “which is the second death.” So, after this thousand years at this Great White Throne of chapter 20, verses 11-15. In chapter 20:10, Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, the beast and the false prophet are still there after a thousand years and the verses, the last part of chapter 20 and this verse show us that those who are not in the Book of Life are cast into that very same Lake of Fire that Matthew tells us was prepared for the devil and his angels.