

The Science of Sin

Part 3

“Fire”

By

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and Friends

Fire

IS GOD JUST?

1 John 4:16 tells us that “God is love.” It was this love that Christ came to impart to the world.

Christ’s Object Lessons p.415. It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth...The last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of His character of love.”

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- **Question:** But to answer the question, “is God just?,” would you say that our own justice system is fair?
- **Answer:** NO
- **Question:** Why not? (It is arbitrary)
- **Answer:** The laws of the land follow Society. Society is not contained by laws. Laws of man are constantly changing, always evolving. **Man’s laws are an arbitrary system.** This is what makes our system unjust.

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- In order for God to be just, God would have to be free from all forms of arbitrariness. He does so by revealing that the punishment for sin is inherent within sin itself, and that the punishment actually fits the crime (unlike our system). The intrinsic nature of sin is such that it is as unchanging or immutable as the law of gravity (a kind of physics if you will), a natural law which is non-negotiable. This is the Justice of reality – **SIN IS DEATH.**

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- Desire of Ages 764, “By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The GLORY of Him who is love will destroy them. At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished: but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the **INEVITABLE RESULT OF SIN**. At the end of the 1000 years ... when sin has manifested its nature,... then the extermination of sin will vindicate God’s love. . .” (For further study – see “the Veil).

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- **The greatest example of the justice of God is demonstrated in the death of the wicked.**
- Revelation 20:9 reads, “And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”

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- Early Writings p. 294 - Commenting on this verse, we read, “Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action. But fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. I saw that some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer . . . “They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained. Said the angel, "**The worm of life shall not die**; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon... Satan and his angels suffered long.

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- ...Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of his own sins, but also of the sins of the redeemed host, which had been placed upon him; and he must also suffer for the ruin of souls which he had caused.”
- **Question:** How is this possible?
- One would logically conclude that God would have to intervene and prevent physical laws from doing their natural work. With that understanding, the system then becomes arbitrary, not to mention **SATANIC**.
- The moment we accept that possibility, then I believe we are going down the wrong path.

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- **Answer:**
- There are four fires mentioned in the Bible.
 - Jeremiah 23:29 - God's word is a fire
 - 1 Samuel 15:11 - (Hebrew Strong's 2734) grieved is the word for fire. Mental anguish = fire.
 - Jeremiah and Ezekiel – “Brutish” is a physical display of anger = fire. (Hebrew Strong's 1197,1198) = savage, one that is cruel; and is the word for fire.
 - Literal fire.
 - **Note: There are three spiritual fires and one physical fire.**
 - **Question:** If Christ died the same death that the wicked will die at the end of a thousand years, where is the fire on the cross?

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- To better understand the answer to this question, it would be wise to first pause and **investigate the cross**.
- Isaiah 53:10 & Matthew 26:38 tells us that He made His mind a sacrifice for sin.
- This is demonstrated in the word “GETHSEMANE” = Olive Press.
- **GESTHEMENE** = OLIVE PRESS symbolism. When one analyzes the **physical features** of the olive press, we see that the olives are thrown into this press and a great stone crushes them causing their oil to exit out the bottom of the press. (**Spiritual meaning**) = Christ is the symbol of the olive. He walks into this garden which is the olive press. There, by taking upon Himself the sins of the world symbolized by the great stone, the Holy Spirit or oil is crushed out of Him. So the very meaning of the word Gethsemane was demonstrating what was taking place in His life spiritually.

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Answer: Desire of Ages p.772 “But it was not the spear thrust, it was not the pain of the cross, that caused the death of Jesus. ... His heart was broken by mental anguish. He was slain by the **SIN** of the world.”

Isaiah 53:4 tells us that Christ was smitten and afflicted by His Father.

- BC 7A 223 – “The sword of justice was unsheathed, and the **wrath of God against iniquity rested upon man’s substitute**, Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father... And the human nature of the Son of God staggered under the terrible horror of the guilt of sin,... He bore the **wrath of God** for a sinful world (**FIRE = MENTAL ANGUISH**).”

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The Wrath of God

- **Question: What is the “Wrath of God?”**
- **Answer:** On the cross it is shown to be a terrible realization of the enormity of sin, as perceived through the eyes of sin itself. The experience of God’s punishment is thus the experience of realization. Wrath, comes as a form of awareness, the awareness of the horror and depth of sin, an awareness that sin itself enforces with fearful terror. This was the punishment for our sins that Christ endured.

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- **The Wrath of God** (con't)
- “Wrath” in Hebrew (Strong’s Concordance) is also the word for “sin” – “EBRAH” (5678 & Root is 5674)
- Sin (Hebrew 817(Strong’s Concordance)) is GUILT.
- Romans 4:15, Because the law worketh wrath for where no law is, there is no transgression.
- Romans 2:5, “...treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath ...”

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- **The Wrath of God:** (Con't)
- **Question: Why is it called “God’s Wrath?”**
- **Answer:** Because He took our wrath (or sin) upon Himself as if it were His. 2 Corinthians 5:2 says, “He became sin for us. . .” Romans 5:9 says, “we shall be saved from wrath (or sin) through Him. Christ identified so closely with sinners that He speaks of our sins as if they were His, so that we can speak of His righteousness in our lives, as if it were ours. So whenever the term, “wrath of God” appears in the Bible, you must understand that wrath comes from sinners, **not** from God. But the fact that He suffered it, He says it is His.

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- **The Wrath of God (Con't)**
- The Sanctuary clearly teaches a day of visitation, a day when the sins of the wicked will be given back to them. Remember, this is demonstrated in Jeremiah 14:10, “Thus saith the Lord unto this people, thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet (a life not in harmony with God), therefore the Lord doth not accept them; He will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins”
- Vs. 16, “. . . For I will pour their wickedness upon them.”
- Vs. 12, Their wickedness came in the form of sword, famine and pestilence.

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- Zephaniah 1:14,15 reads, “The great day of the Lord is near and hasteth greatly, . . . That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness . . .”
- Nahum 1:2 says, . . . “and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.”
- Romans 5:9 says, “we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

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- **Worm:**

- To better understand the statement about the fire in Early Writings p 294, Ellen White has given a **clue**: The word “Worm” is that clue.
- Isaiah 66:24 The angel said, for their worm shall not die, **neither shall their fire be quenched**; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”
- Worm (Strong’s concordance Hebrew 7426) means “to rise (exalt oneself).” Hebrew 8438 maggot-the crimson grub. Red = sin (Isaiah 1:18) “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
- “Worm” is a symbol of sin and the destructive power of sin is guilt.

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- **Worm:** (con't)

Example: King Herod – Acts 12:23 says, “And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” Commenting on that, Ellen White says in *Desire of Ages* p 223, “He was in constant fear that John would avenge his death by passing condemnation upon him and his house. Herod was reaping that which God had declared to be the result of a course of sin,--"a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: . . .

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- **Worm:** (con't)

...and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." Deut. 28:65-67. The sinner's own thoughts are his accusers; and there can be no torture keener than the **stings of a guilty conscience**, which give him no rest day nor night. 1 Corinthians 15:56 says, "the sting of death is sin"

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Worm: (con't)

Education p.144 – “Against every evildoer God's law utters condemnation. He may disregard that voice, he may seek to drown its warning, but in vain. It follows him. It makes itself heard. It destroys his peace. If unheeded, it pursues him to the grave. It bears witness against him at the judgment. A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body.” **This is a spiritual fire which is nothing more than guilt and despair brought about by the day of visitation.**

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- **What happens at the end of the 1000 years?**
- Patriarchs and Prophets p 498: “When the records of heaven shall be opened, the Judge will not in words declare to man his guilt, but will cast one penetrating, convicting glance, and every deed, every transaction of life, will be vividly impressed upon the memory of the wrongdoer.”
- Great Controversy p.666 says, “As soon as the books of records are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed...Each actor recalls the part which he performed...all behold the enormity of their guilt.”
- Prov. 5:22 says, “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.”

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- Psalm 9:15,16 – “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is ensnared in the work of his own hands.” Unlike the 144,000 who travailed to give birth, a birth which frees them from sin, the wicked travail to give birth to a character, a birth which forever holds them captive, and ultimately destroys them.
- Ezekiel 28:18 “. . . Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, . . .” “Midst of thee” = (out of or with-in), Hebrews 8432 (Strong’s Concordance). This is a spiritual fire.
- Jeremiah 2:19 – says your own sins will punish you. (The punishment is guilt).

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- **Question:** So what is actually happening here?
- **Answer:** The veil is being lifted and the glory of God is being revealed and they haven't made provision for that experience. As they become frozen with fear, they will become suicidal in a very short time.
- Isaiah caught just a glimpse of the throne of God and immediately he realized his wretchedness and confessed that he was a man of unclean lips. Were it not for the live coal and the atoning blood of Christ he would have perished.

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The Cross:

- Although Christ made provisions to have the veil lifted in His life, that experience known as the “horror of great darkness” almost destroyed Him. But we read in Desire of Ages p. 756, “Amid the awful darkness, **APPARENTLY FORSAKEN OF GOD**, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor.”

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- DA. 693. “But God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour's agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighted down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin.”
- Beams of Light (one of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to restore man. That aspect was removed and is removed at the cross – Jacob’s Trouble. The Intercessor – No more substitution!

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- As we look at the 144,000, we will find that they too, will have made provisions to have that veil removed, they like Christ, will understand for the first time, what it means to stand without an intercessor, **APPARENTLY FORSAKEN OF GOD**, substitution has ended. Were it not for the victory already attained, they would surely perish with guilt and despair, but they will endure the horror of great darkness and come through it the same way Christ came through it. If one has overcome all known sin, availed oneself of all available light, and has been careful to acquire true faith in time of opportunity, then this faith can be brought to bear against blinding and lethal despair. Through strength earlier gained faith pierces through the darkness and sees a love that despair denies. Thus, at last, despair is vanquished, and once again the light shines, this time brighter than ever before.

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- The wicked have not made provisions to have that veil removed. Such a one is vulnerable indeed, for when confronted in the judgment with the law of God, he sees as never before his wretchedness. His counterfeit source of acceptance is stripped from him, but he has nothing true to put in its place. Now his blindness becomes his avenging enemy, for with a profound sense of guilt, he can see no love or mercy reaching down to him. He has not educated himself to see these things in time of peace, and now the blackening blindness of his sin makes them all the more remote from his darkened sight.

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- As terror seizes him, his very terror becomes conclusive evidence to him that God has forever forsaken him. Thus his terror feeds on itself, carrying him down in a vicious circle of condemnation and despair. Within such terror faith becomes impossible. The blindness acquired in prosperity now becomes irreversible, forever keeping God's love and mercy beyond sight and therefore beyond reach. The sinner can receive no life or grace from God because these can be received only through the clear-eyed perceptions of unwavering faith. Thus, through blindness, he is as lost as his despair says he is. His despair becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. "I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord."
Zephaniah 1:17.

Conclusion:

- God's retribution is nothing more than the outworking of a function of law, a law that Christ Himself was powerless to circumvent. (Sin is Death).

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- **It is in the form of cruel despair that sin, once so congenial, assumes its greatest power and imposes its fiercest temptations.**
- **For 6,000 years, God has veiled the destructive power of sin. When it does come, it comes in the form of guilt and despair, mental anguish. It is a Spiritual Fire which in many respects is more cruel and just as destructive as a literal fire.**
- Isa. 24:22 says, “And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.” This text is a parallel to Revelation chapter 20.

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- Isaiah 28:14-19 we find in vs.15, these people have made a covenant with death and with hell. This covenant is described in Ezekiel 13:22 which reads, “Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:”
- Vs17, “and hail shall sweep away their refuge of lies...”
- Vs 19, it shall be sheer terror to understand the message.

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- Psalm 105:32 tells us, “He gave them hail for rain.” Rain is symbol of the Holy Spirit. They rejected the early rain, therefore they did not receive the latter. So when the truth did come to them, the truth became a crushing stone. They, like Christ, will cry out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me,” and God will simply answer, I didn’t, I gave you my Son.
- **Summation of the Love of God:** “I gave My Son.” This form of justice reveals the love (character) of God, knowing that God would *never subject anyone* to this kind of punishment **without first taking it upon Himself** (the Cross). Thus He made a way of escape for those who avail themselves of Christ’s paying that severe penalty. **This justice is not an arbitrary system.** They are reaping only what they have sown and the punishment actually fits the crime, unlike our penal system.

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- **Summation:** (con't), Let's be clear: Apart from the **spiritual fire**, I believe that there will indeed be a **physical fire** as the Bible indicates, but I do believe that the Bible clearly teaches a day of visitation, a day when the sins of the wicked are given back to them, igniting a **spiritual fire** from within, which comes first. This is a fire that is too often overlooked. **When the physical fire does come, it will be a mercy killing.**

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- **Conclusion:** 5 Testimonies p.740.2 - “All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it.”