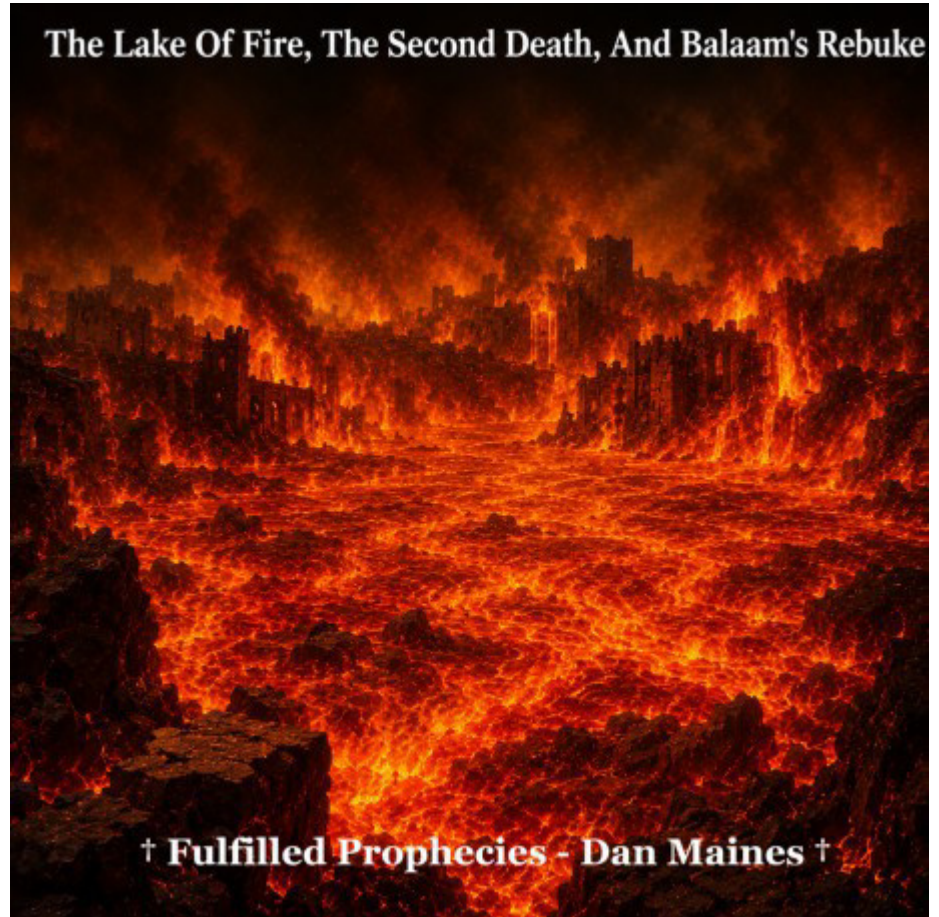


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## Hell - The Lake Of Fire, The Second Death, And Balaam's Rebuke



By Dan Maines

## The Lake Of Fire, The Second Death, And Balaam's Rebuke

### Introduction

† Many people read the lake of fire as a future place of endless torment after the end of the physical world. But when we let Scripture interpret Scripture, we see that Revelation was written about the judgment of the old covenant world, the destruction of the persecuting city, and the covenant transition that reached its climax in AD 70. The lake of fire was part of that covenant

judgment language.

† We also need to understand passages like 2 Peter 2:16 in their proper context. Peter wasn't writing random stories. He was warning about false teachers who were leading Israel back into corruption and destruction just before the judgment Jesus promised in that generation. (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34)

† The Bible consistently connects fire with covenant judgment, purification, destruction of the wicked system, and the removal of what was passing away. (Isaiah 33:14; Malachi 4:1; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:27-29)

## **2 Peter 2:15-16**

abandoning the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the reward of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own offense, for a mute donkey, speaking with a human voice, restrained the insanity of the prophet.

† Peter compares the false teachers of his day to Balaam because Balaam corrupted God's people for personal gain. (Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14)

† Balaam led Israel into compromise, immorality, and judgment. Peter says the false teachers in the first century were doing the same thing to covenant Israel before its destruction. (Jude 11)

† The phrase stayed the madness of the prophet shows how spiritually blind Balaam had become. Even an animal recognized the danger while the prophet ignored God's warning. Peter uses this to expose the blindness of the corrupt leaders in his own generation. (Matthew 15:14)

† Peter's entire chapter is about imminent judgment against corrupt covenant leaders and false teachers. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

### **Matthew 13:40-42**

So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

† The phrase end of the world is the end of the age, not the end of planet earth. Jesus was speaking about the end of the old covenant age that was coming upon that generation. (Matthew 24:3; Matthew 24:34)

† The furnace of fire language matches the covenant judgment imagery used throughout the prophets against Jerusalem and rebellious Israel. (Isaiah 31:9)

† Jesus was warning about the coming separation between the righteous and the wicked as the old covenant system came to its end. (Matthew 3:10-12)

### **Revelation 19:20**

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.

† The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire before Revelation 20. This shows the lake of fire was already

active in connection with first century judgment events.  
(Revelation 17:8-11)

† The beast represented the persecuting Roman power connected to Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem.  
(Revelation 13:18)

† The false prophet represented the corrupt religious system that supported the beastly persecution against the saints.  
(Revelation 16:13)

† This destroys the idea that the lake of fire belongs only to a distant future after the end of human history.

### **Revelation 20:13-15**

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them; and they were judged, each one of them according to their deeds. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

† Revelation is filled with symbolic language taken from the Old Testament prophets. Death and Hades being cast into the lake of fire doesn't mean literal invisible places were thrown into literal flames. It's covenant judgment imagery showing the complete end of the old covenant order tied to death and separation. (Isaiah 25:7-8; Hosea 13:14)

† The second death was separation from covenant life and exclusion from the New Covenant kingdom. Those outside Christ remained under the condemnation of the old covenant system that was passing away. (John 5:24; Hebrews 8:13)

† The lake of fire represents the complete destruction and removal of the old covenant persecuting order. Jerusalem became the fiery judgment center in AD 70 exactly as Jesus warned. (Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 22:7)

† Gehenna itself was connected to Jerusalem judgment. It was not a medieval torture chamber after the end of the world. Jesus warned that generation repeatedly about fiery destruction coming upon the land. (Matthew 23:33-38)

† Notice that death and Hades are destroyed in the lake of fire. If the lake of fire were endless conscious torment, then death itself would still continue forever inside it. But Revelation shows the opposite, the destruction of death's covenant reign. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

† The destruction of death means victory had arrived through Christ's completed work and the ending of the old covenant order. (2 Timothy 1:10)

### **Jeremiah 19:10-13**

"Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you, and say to them, 'This is what the LORD of armies says: "To the same extent I will break this people and this city, just as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury their dead in Topheth, because there is no other place for burial. This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants," declares the LORD, "so as to make this city like Topheth. The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly lights and poured out drink offerings to other gods.'"

† Topheth and Gehenna became symbols of covenant judgment against Jerusalem because of rebellion and corruption. (Jeremiah 7:30-34)

† Jesus drew directly from this judgment imagery when warning Jerusalem about Gehenna. (Matthew 5:22; Matthew 23:33)

† The background of the lake of fire is deeply rooted in Old Testament judgment against covenant-breaking Israel.

### **Isaiah 30:33**

For Topheth has long been ready,  
Indeed, it has been prepared for the king.  
He has made it deep and large,  
A pyre of fire with plenty of wood;  
The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.

† Fire and brimstone language already existed in covenant judgment prophecy long before Revelation. (Genesis 19:24)

† Isaiah used this imagery against earthly kings and nations under divine judgment, not against a future post-world torture chamber.

† Revelation borrows this same prophetic language to describe the destruction of the persecuting covenant order in the first century.

### **Revelation 21:7-8**

The one who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,

their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

† Revelation 21 describes the New Jerusalem, the New Covenant people of God. This isn't about a physical cube city floating down from outer space. It's covenant language describing God's redeemed people. (Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 12:22-24)

† The contrast is between those inside the New Covenant city and those outside under judgment. (Revelation 22:14-15)

† Fire and brimstone language comes directly from Old Testament covenant judgment language against cities and nations. (Isaiah 34:8-10)

† The second death was the final covenant separation connected to the passing away of the old system. Those rejecting Christ remained outside the fulfilled kingdom life. (John 8:24)

† Revelation repeatedly says these things were near, shortly coming to pass, and connected to that first century generation. (Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:10)

### **Hebrews 12:27-29**

This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

† Hebrews explains the covenant transition clearly. The things being shaken were the old covenant structures that were about to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:13)

† God's consuming fire language was always covenant judgment language against sinful Israel and corrupt systems. (Deuteronomy 4:24)

† The unshakable kingdom remained after the old covenant world was removed in AD 70. That's why believers today live in the fulfilled kingdom of Christ. (Colossians 1:13)

## **Historical References**

† Eusebius wrote that the destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled the warnings spoken by Christ against that generation.

† Josephus described Jerusalem's destruction in language matching Jesus' prophecies concerning fire, tribulation, famine, and judgment upon the city.

† Clement of Alexandria connected many prophetic warnings to the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem and the close of the old covenant age.

† Lactantius spoke of Jerusalem's destruction as divine judgment upon those who rejected Christ.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† We don't live waiting for another covenant world to end because Christ already fulfilled His promises concerning that age. (Matthew 24:34)

† We live in the unshakable kingdom right now. (Hebrews 12:28)

† The lake of fire reminds us that God fully removed the old covenant system and established the everlasting New Covenant through Christ. (Hebrews 9:26)

† We should stop reading Revelation through modern fear systems and start reading it through the time statements and covenant language given by Scripture itself. (Revelation 1:1; Revelation 22:10)

† Christ reigns now, His kingdom stands now, and believers already have access to life in Him. (John 5:24; Ephesians 2:6)

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** Was the lake of fire a literal burning place somewhere in the universe?

**A:** No. Revelation uses symbolic covenant judgment imagery throughout the book. The lake of fire represents complete judgment, destruction, and removal of the old covenant persecuting order. (Revelation 20:14; Isaiah 34:8-10)

**Q:** What is the second death?

**A:** The second death was covenant separation and exclusion from the New Covenant life found only in Christ. Those who rejected Christ remained under condemnation as the old covenant age ended. (John 8:24; Revelation 21:8)

**Q:** Why are death and Hades cast into the lake of fire?

**A:** Because Christ's victory brought an end to the covenant reign of death tied to the old system. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57;

Hosea 13:14)

**Q:** If death is cast into the lake of fire, how can death continue forever there?

**A:** It can't. Revelation shows the destruction of death itself, proving the lake of fire symbolizes the end and removal of the old covenant death system, not eternal ongoing torment. (Revelation 20:14; 1 Corinthians 15:26)

**Q:** Was Gehenna the same as the lake of fire?

**A:** Both use judgment imagery connected to Jerusalem and covenant destruction. Gehenna referred to the judgment coming upon that generation and the rejected city. (Matthew 23:33-38)

**Q:** Why does Revelation call it fire and brimstone?

**A:** Because Revelation borrows Old Testament judgment language used against cities and nations under covenant wrath. (Isaiah 34:8-10; Isaiah 30:33)

**Q:** Why was the judgment called near if it's still future thousands of years later?

**A:** Because Revelation was written to first century believers about events that were shortly coming to pass. (Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:10)

**Q:** Did Jesus connect fire judgment to Jerusalem?

**A:** Yes. Jesus warned Jerusalem repeatedly about fiery judgment, desolation, and destruction coming upon that generation. (Matthew 23:36-38; Luke 21:20-22)

**Q:** Why did Peter mention Balaam in 2 Peter 2?

**A:** Because Balaam became a pattern of corrupt teachers who led God's people into compromise and destruction for personal gain. Peter said the same corruption existed in the first century before Jerusalem's fall. (2 Peter 2:1-3; Revelation 2:14)

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## Source Index

† 2 Peter 2:15-16; Matthew 13:40-42; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:13-15; Jeremiah 19:10-13; Isaiah 30:33; Revelation 21:7-8; Hebrews 12:27-29

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3; Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata; Lactantius, Divine Institutes

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