

The Final Firestorm - Lesson 10 of 21 - Landmarks of Prophecy

Welcome, once again, friends to this presentation of 'Landmarks of Prophecy.' And tonight's study is, I think, one that is not only very important, but it could revolutionize your picture of God as it did for me. And let me give you just a little personal testimony that will help lead into what we're going to talk about tonight. I mentioned earlier, when I shared my testimony, I went to about fourteen different schools and, among those schools, were a couple of different Christian schools, even though my parents were not Christians, by any means. And I remember hearing what many of us have heard, that if you're good, when you die you go to Heaven. And if you're bad and you die, you go to the other place where there is molten sulphur and burning brimstone. And all the experience of every square centimeter of your body in flames - not for a moment, or a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a month, or a year, or a century, or a millennium - but for eternity you will experience blistering, burning misery - screaming, crying, writhing. And I heard that and I thought, 'Wow, God's a sadist.'

I'm just telling you what I thought. I said - here I am, ten years old - I mean, you know, I was young but I could think it through. I said, 'He made me. No one asked me if I wanted to be made.' It seems like everybody's got this propensity to do things wrong - especially a ten-year-old boy, right? And 'If I should die now, I will be tortured eternally' - and I said, 'How can I love a God like that? How can I believe in a God like that?' And somewhere during that time I threw out the idea of the Christian biblical God because I thought, 'This is a pagan God.' And in my heart I thought, 'If there is a God like that,' - forgive me, I say this just to be honest - I thought, 'I hate Him.' I thought, 'He's cruel.' Because I wouldn't do that to my dog and I was pretty bad. When I finally learned what the Bible really teaches about this subject, it was so liberating for me, it enabled me to trust and to love God.

Now, just before anyone changes the channel and says, 'Oh, Pastor Doug does not believe in Hell or the lake of fire,' I do. There are two main things that we're going to study tonight. I'll just summarize it for you right now. They say that part of good teaching and preaching is tell people what you're going to say, then say it, then tell them what it is you said. So let me tell you what I'm going to say. People are wrong about how long Hell burns and when it burns. So we're going to study that from the Bible now and - do we believe the Bible will have the answers for this? Let's find out what the Word of God teaches.

We're going to begin by going to a story. Of course, our lesson tonight is lesson #10 and it's titled 'The Final Firestorm.' The final firestorm - it begins with a story that we know from Genesis chapter 13 that talks about Lot. And you can read there in Genesis 13:13 that originally, Abraham and Lot were together with their sheep, but because they had so many sheep and the shepherds were fighting with each other, Abraham said, 'You know, we probably ought to split things up.' And he said, 'Lot, you pick which way you want to go. You go to the right, I'll go to the left. You go north, I'll go south. You pick first.' Lot was the nephew, he should have asked Abraham, 'Where do you want to go and I'll take what's left?'

And Lot looked down at the valley of Sodom - the valley there that runs to the very lowest point of the Jordan valley - and it says it was 'Watered like the garden of God' back then. It was a beautiful place. Lots of tropical fruits and food and pasture and he thought, 'Well, that's the best part of the country.' He says, 'Tell you what Abraham, I'm going down there. My wife says she's kind of getting tired of country living anyway and she'd like to be a little closer to the mall and so we're going to move - we're going to move down there.' Abraham - he shook his head because it says in the Bible - Genesis 13:13 - "The men of Sodom were wicked." - Not just wicked, exceedingly wicked. And it even tells us in Peter, it says that Lot, when he lived there, he vexed his righteous soul day by day, looking at the wicked things that they did. Kind of like our culture today. Finally, God sent the angels down.

You know the story - to Sodom to rescue Lot before He destroys it. And Lot was reluctant to leave because he had kids there that had married others and he tried to get his sons-in-law and his other daughters - he said, 'Flee, the Lord is going to destroy this place!' And they mocked him. And he lingered

so long that finally the two angels - and the people in the town were so bad they actually tried to assault and molest the angels - boy, that's going too far. And the angels grabbed - one of them - the hand of Lot, his wife, and the other - the two daughters - just about pulled them out of the city - and they said, Genesis 19, verse 17, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, ...escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

And then you read on - Genesis 19:24 - "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven." And you can read again now in verse 28 - and it says that Abraham, he heard the roar and from the hill he could look down in the valley and it says, "And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, ...and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." This really happened. And I was checking today and - I forgot to bring something with me I wanted to bring and show you. I've been to the Jordan valley. I've got some friends that went to the south and the region where Sodom and Gomorrah were - they really did exist - and it's the only place in the world where you can find this, but embedded in the potash-like countryside down in this region are these little round yellow sulphur balls. Did you know that? How many of you were aware of that? Let me see your hands. I see some of you are.

I actually brought one of those to a meeting one time and I lit it just to show people - they'll just ignite. You can burn them just like that. But you know what burning sulphur smells like? Rotten eggs. It just about cleared the place out. So I just wanted to show you that this is a real event that happened and there in that very region where they tell us that they existed, they can find - only place in the world - just peppered in the ground are these sulphur balls that when they hit the ground. Some of them just extinguished themselves on impact and embedded themselves in the ash and are still there today. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

And then the Bible tells us - Genesis 19:26 - what did God - the angel say to Sodom - I'm sorry, to Lot and his family? Do not look back. Why do you think He said that? Because it represented looking back on the world. He was saying, 'Flee for your life.' It's like when Jesus said, 'If you put your hand to the plow and look back, you're not worthy of the Kingdom.' Jesus, speaking of the second coming, you know what He says? 'Remember Lot's wife.' One of the shortest verses in the Bible - next to 'Jesus wept' - is 'Remember Lot's wife.' What happened? "But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." It's interesting, that country down there by the Dead Sea - sometimes it's called 'The Salt Sea' because it's just so full of minerals. The water from the Jordan River is running in so fast and it's so low - hottest place on Earth - or lowest place on Earth - it's a very hot place too - that it becomes a mineral trap for all the waters there because the evaporation exceeds the input. And she turned into some of the environment there - pillar of salt.

Now, what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, the Bible says, is an illustration of what will happen to the wicked in the last days. Let's go to our first question as we engage this subject about what is the truth about the lake of fire and hell? You know, whenever I teach this subject - my father didn't use the word 'hell' in a biblical sense, so I always feel a little bit conflicted when I even say that in a Christian setting. But it is in your Bible so let's keep it - keep it on that term in our mind.

Question #1: What two cities are given as an example for the destruction of the wicked? And you find the answer there in 2 Peter, chapter 2, verse 6 - it says, "And turning the cities of" - what's the answer? - "Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." And, by the way, that's some of the country, in that picture there, that you find in that region. Just all burnt up and dry.

Question #2: When will the wicked - now here's the question - what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of what's going to happen to the wicked in the last days. When will the wicked be destroyed in hellfire? Alright, these - this is what the prophet tells us - 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 9, "The Lord knoweth how to ...reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." When are the

unjust - or the wicked - reserved till? When do they start getting their punishment? They're being reserved - the day of judgment - the day of the Lord. Are - if they're being reserved for punishment until then, would they be burning in a lake of fire now? No, because judgment hasn't happened. Resurrection hasn't happened, right? You probably gathered this from our prior study. Jesus said - John 12:48 - "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him" - he's talking about the lost - "in the last day." The judgment happens when? The last day. This is when the punishment happens, they're reserved. It happens in the last day. It is future. And that should make sense.

I mean, would it be fair if Cain - if you go right to Hell as soon as you die if you're bad - lost - Cain, who murdered his brother 5,000 years ago or more - if he went to Hell right when he died, he's already been burning 5,000 years longer than Joseph Stalin or Adolph Hitler. That wouldn't be fair. And yet the Bible says every man is rewarded according to his works - that God is just. Furthermore, you can read - Jesus tells a parable in Matthew chapter 13, verse 40 - He tells a parable about the wheat and the tares. He says, "As therefore the tares" - those are weeds - "are gathered and burned in the fire;" - He said - this is Matthew 13:40 - "so shall it be in the end of this world."

So, when is it going to happen? The end of the world. Jesus tells a parable that explains how the wicked are going to be dealt with. He calls it the wheat and the tares - the wheat and the weeds - and first they gather the wheat into the barn and then they gather the tares and they're burned and Jesus said, 'So will it be at the end of the world.' In this next verse He fills out that parable. "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather ...them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." This is speaking of at the end of the 1,000 years when they are - they get their executive judgment. Remember the great white throne judgment? If you were here when we studied the millennium - so that's when they're finally getting their final judgment and they're going to be punished.

Is it happening now? No. Does the Bible teach about purgatory? You know the teaching of purgatory really was something that was developed by the Catholic church over a thousand years ago? And I think it was in the last five years the Catholic church officially renounced that teaching. Are you aware of that? I don't know if all the parishes have taken it up but they issued an encyclical that denied the belief in purgatory. So there's not this halfway - and the word 'purgatory' comes from the word 'purge,' which means if you're not quite good enough for Heaven, maybe you just need a little bit of hell. And you go to this place and you suffer a little bit and someone might pray for you and get you out of there but that was, frankly, developed as a mechanism to kind of scare people into church. And also they said, 'Look, so and so, I know they went to church, but just in case they're burning in purgatory, if you make some offerings, we will pray for them.' And I think you can see how that could be abused.

Question #3: If the wicked who have died are not yet in Hell, then, according to the Bible, where are they? Let the Bible tell us. Jesus said - John 5:28 and 29, "The hour is coming," - that's future tense, right? - "in the which all that are" - where? - "in the graves shall hear His voice, and come forth;" - then he describes the two resurrections - "...they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." - That's at the end of the 1,000 years. First Jesus says, 'They that have done good, the resurrection of life; they that have done evil, the resurrection of damnation.' That's the second resurrection. That's when they get their reward. The hour is coming when they'll be rewarded. It's in the future. Job 32 - I'm sorry - Job 21, verses 30 and 32 - it says, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction. ...yet shall he be brought to the" - where? - "to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb." Doesn't say that his body is just in the tomb, it says that he's in the tomb. He's reserved. He's waiting - dreamless sleep - until the day of judgment.

They're not - and, you know, that ought to make a lot of people feel better, right there, even before I'm done with this presentation. Can you imagine how it would drive some people to distraction? A mother that maybe has an adult son that dies suddenly in what appears to be a lost condition and if she believes that as soon as you die you go to Hell and you're writhing? Any mother who really believes that - what

do you think - how do you think she's tormented by the idea that, for the rest of her life, while she walks the Earth, at the same moment, she has a child that is being tortured every second? There are - people have committed suicide - people have gone insane because of this belief - this false teaching. They're asleep. You can put R.I.P. - Rest in peace - on any grave because, until the judgment, they're aware of nothing. Isn't that what the Bible says?

Question #4: - Start at the beginning - what is the reward, or punishment, of sin? What did God say? Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." You remember when - now when I say 'You remember' I know you weren't back in the Garden of Eden. Nobody here is quite that old. But I was going to say, you remember in the Bible when God said to Adam and Eve, 'Do not eat the forbidden fruit or you will die?' The penalty for that sin was death. The devil said to Eve, through the serpent - she said, 'Oh, God said if we eat it we'll die - God said we'll die.' And the devil said, 'Don't believe God, you'll not really die. You're immortal. You'll either live forever in Heaven or you'll live forever in Hell, but you can't die. You'll be like gods.' You see, the devil tried to instill within man what he desires. The devil is consumed with the truth. It tears him up that he is not God and that he is not immortal. Even the devil has an end.

So God said even after man sinned he didn't let him stay in the Garden of Eden. And what did the Lord say? God - Father, Son and Spirit were speaking among themselves - 'We need to drive men from the garden, lest he put out his hand and take also of the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.' Was man evicted from the garden? Then we don't have that immortality. We are - he says he's going to die. Sinners do not live forever. Very clear.

Question #5: What are the only two choices for all men? It's very simple. Now, the strongest verse to prove this point is the most popular verse in the Bible. What is that? John 3:16. Why don't you say it with me? This part of it - "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This translates the same in any language. You've got two options: not - you've got - perish is your option if you don't believe; eternal life is your option if you do believe.

He doesn't say you're going to live eternally in fire and you're going to live eternally in Heaven. He doesn't word it that way. You ever buy food that's perishable? That means it's just going to decompose and turn back into the elements of the earth. It's going to cease to exist. You ever heard someone say, 'Perish the thought?' That doesn't mean set it on fire and keep it burning. It means get rid of it. And so, yet this teaching - came out of paganism - has become very popular in Christianity.

What is the penalty for sin? Death. What did Jesus do on the cross? Died. If the penalty - follow me - if the penalty for sin is eternal burning, then Jesus did not pay the full price on the cross because He's not still burning, is He? When Daniel was told he had to go to the lion's den because he broke the king's law and the penalty was going to the lion's den, did the king fulfill the penalty by sending him to the lion's den? Did he leave him there? One day - he took him out - but he fulfilled his law. Penalty for sin is death. Jesus died. The penalty for sin is not eternal torment. Jesus, He did suffer for all the wicked in the world. He suffered like we'll never know, but it's not a perpetual time on the cross. You see what I'm saying? Jesus took our penalty which is death. He died. He's not still burning.

Question #6: What happened to the wicked - what will happen (I should say) to the wicked in hellfire? Psalms 37 - here's our answer - verse 10 and verse 20 - "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be. ...but the wicked shall perish, ...into smoke shall they consume away." What kind of words can we use that are better to explain these things? Look in Malachi chapter 4, verses 1 and 3 - the Bible says, "The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; ...and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up." - Now when something's burnt up, what's left? - "...and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet."

You know, there's a picture here on the screen of, what you saw there - I think it's gone now - was

Pompeii. And it's right near Mount Vesuvius in Italy and I've been there. I went there years ago when I was on that boat that sailed around the Mediterranean - they took us. And I tell you, it was very sobering for a 16-year-old to go and to see all these forms of bodies that were frozen in position because they were basically burned to death by the heat and the gasses and the hot ash that was raining all around them. It must have been very much like what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah and suddenly, you know, one day everything was fine and then right after that, both Pompeii and Herculaneum were just enveloped in death and fire. Jesus said, 'Remember Lot's wife.' Things can happen suddenly.

One more little amazing fact about this that I thought was interesting - Mount Vesuvius blew up and Pompeii was buried in about 79 AD. Pompeii was - it was the Sodom of the Roman kingdom. It was the Las Vegas - nothing against our friends in Las Vegas that are watching right now. But you know what I mean? They call it sin city. It was where the soldiers from the Roman empire went for their R and R. And they still know - I've been there, I've seen it - they've got the paintings of the brothels and all this just stuff that ought to make anyone blush - basically pornography - it's on the walls - and the statues all throughout the city. And you see the judgment that fell on this place and you see with your own eyes what they were prizing and what they were doing and what they - what their art and entertainment was. And it harkens back to what happened with Sodom and Gomorrah and it also speaks to our world and our country today that is obsessed with immorality and violence.

One more little bit of trivia. The Roman legion under Titus that were instrumental - the specific troops - in destroying Jerusalem, were vacationing in Pompeii when the mountain blew. Isn't that amazing? Of course, it was nine years later, but you wonder if it was some kind of a forestalled judgment.

Question #7: Where will hellfire be located? I don't know how to tell you this, but it will be in Albuquerque, as well as everywhere else. You can read in Revelation 20, verse 9 - it says, "They went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about," - so, before God rains that fire and brimstone down, where's the devil and all the forces of Gog and Magog? All the wicked? On the earth. And it says, "...and fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them." Where is it? On the earth. You can read in 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 10, "The elements shall melt with" - what kind of heat? - "Fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." And yet how many of us have heard Hell is somewhere down yonder, right? Way down there in the molten somewhere, the devil's got these burning caverns and - I remember one time I was checking out of a market somewhere and they had these supermarket tabloids and I told you, I don't buy them, but I do, sometimes - you can't help but read the covers. Matter of fact, sometimes I've just blurted out laughing. I think this was one of those times. The cover said, 'Oil well drillers drill too deep in Siberia and demons escape from Hell.' I think it said, 'First they heard shrieks coming out of the well.' And, you know, that's actually not that odd. But you ever put a seashell to your ear? If you drill an oil well down that far, you're going to hear things coming up. It's not devils.

The devil isn't down there somewhere, in the molten, under the ground. When God says, in the book of Job, 'Satan, where'd you come from?' He didn't say, "I came from a hole in the earth." He said, 'I came from walking to and fro on the earth. 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, is going around as a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour. He's roaming to and fro on the earth. He's not hiding out down in an office down there somewhere. Satan's on the Earth. It doesn't say that Hell is in a - show me a Scripture. You know why? I'll tell you why people get that idea. It often talks about descending into Hell in the Bible and those terms - is - many of them are from Hebrew - it's a word called 'Sheol' in the Old Testament, and it means 'grave.' The word that you find in the Old Testament frequently - 'Thou will not leave my soul in Hell.' - That translates 'Sheol' - it just means 'grave' - that's all it means.

Four words in the Bible are translated for Hell: 'Sheol,' in the Old Testament. In the New Testament you've got three. You've got Gehenna, which was a valley outside of Jerusalem, called 'the Valley of

Hinnom.' You've got 'Hades,' which comes from Greek mythology. And you've got 'Tartarus.' It was only used one time in the writings of Peter. Gehenna was the city dump - the Valley of Hinnom. They used to have idols there and so they decided to make it a city dump because they had worshiped pagan images down there. And all of the refuse was put in there. When an unclean animal died, it went to Gehenna. And they had their old baskets there and old cloth there and every now and then someone would throw their ashes out there and it was - it was smoldering because they still had hot coals in it. So they let it burn. It was good. It kept the gasses down and it helped consume things.

Any of you ever burn garbage? When I grew up, in New York City, we had - we'd walk out of our apartment - we had an incinerator. We'd just open this trap and you'd throw your garbage down and, back then, we didn't care about pollution when I grew up. And the air in New York was bad. But everybody had - all these buildings had incinerators in the basement. Any of you remember those things? Yeah, and we just kept it burning. And so Jesus is referencing - one of His references to Hell He talks about a place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. It was full of worms and dead bodies and maggots and it was smoldering and that's 'Gehenna.' That's the word that he uses for Gehenna.

Question #8: Will the devil be in charge of hellfire? We often see him with his trident or his pitchfork. Could you trust him to reward people evenly? No. Revelation 20:10, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone." You can say 'Amen' now. That's good news. I mean, if anyone deserves to go there, he does, right? He started all the problems. He's not in charge. Could you trust him? Amazing Facts actually has a lesson that's called 'Is the Devil in Charge of Hell?' And, obviously, he would be the most untrustworthy person you could think of to reward people evenly.

Do you know where that comes from? I remember when I was a boy in New York City. I went to public school and they had a school play. They were trying to teach us about the Greek gods - mythology. So they had a school play on the Greek gods and, I don't know why, they asked if I would play Pluto, the god of Hades from the underworld. And he had these dogs - you ever heard of the - the hounds of Hell? And he was in charge of helping people suffer in Hades. Jesus actually uses that term from Greek mythology when He tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Now that's one of the things you're going to ask me about. It's in the back of your lesson. It explains the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It appears one place in Luke. It is clearly a parable but I'll say more about that tomorrow. And so, I learned back then, that a lot of what has come into Christianity, trickled in from the Greco-Roman religions because Christianity absolutely exploded in growth in the Roman Empire, during the time of Paul.

I mean, even Paul says the Gospel's been preached to every creature. The church grew so quickly. Pentecost - thousands were baptized. Miracles were happening. And a lot of the pagans were only half converted. They came in not being properly taught. They tried to mix up the truths from the Word of God about the devil and hell and they got it mixed up with Greek mythology and Pluto and Hades and some of those things stayed for years. But it's not a biblical thing. It's a Greek myth that found its way into the Christian church. Nowhere in the Bible does it say the devil is in charge of Hell, does it?

Question #9: Will the fires of Hell ever go out? This is a big question where I want to spend a moment. Isaiah 47, verse 14, it says, "There shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." It says, 'You'll go forth. The wicked are ashes under the soles of your feet.' After God rains that fire down on Earth upon the wicked, it forms a lake outside the City of God. Everybody is punished according to what they deserve. The only way I can understand that is there'll be a difference of intensity and duration. Some may expire immediately.

Think about people that never heard the Gospel or they were young and they didn't know. God is merciful. He is just. Others will suffer longer. But Christ said everybody is punished according to what they deserve.

But, ultimately, it goes out. It says, 'You'll go forth and you tread upon the wicked, for they are ashes under the soles of your feet.' 'Blessed are the meek, they will inherit' - what? - "The earth." It's the meek who are walking out. I heard a pastor say one time, 'Today sheep graze where dinosaurs thundered. And Christians will walk where the wicked once ruled.' The meek will inherit the Earth.

Question #10: Are both the soul and body destroyed in Hell? Now, if you don't believe Pastor Doug, will you believe Pastor Jesus? Some people say, 'Well, Doug, you're right. The bodies don't burn forever, but the souls burn forever.' I've heard some people say that. Well, let's see what Jesus said. Matthew 10:28, He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy" - to do what? - "destroy both soul and body in hell." What did Jesus say? He said, 'Fear the one who could destroy both soul and body.' He said, 'Don't fear the devil. He can only hurt your body. But God is the one who will destroy soul and body in Hell. And that's what we should fear. Now, what's left when the soul and body are gone? Nothing. You'll perish.

Question #11: For whom will hellfire be kindled? Matthew 25 - I know we're rushing along, friends, because we've got like eighteen questions in tonight's presentation. Matthew chapter 25, verse 41 - Jesus, when He separates the sheep from the goats in this parable, He says to the wicked, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." 'Well there you have it, Pastor Doug, everlasting fire. It says it's going to last forever.' Stay with me. We'll get to that in a minute. But is the devil in charge of hell or does it say that he - that hell is prepared for him and his angels? So it's not just Satan. All the fallen angels and the demons that followed him, they're going to get that same punishment.

So how does the Bible refer to God's destruction of the wicked? Is it something He enjoys? No. Isaiah chapter 28, verse 21, it says, "The Lord ...shall be wroth ...that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act." Someone asked earlier, in one of the questions, 'How can a God of love destroy?' Does He enjoy that? Does God like destroying? You remember when God destroyed the world in the days of Noah? He used water. Are they still drowning today or are they gone? He said, 'Next time, I'll do it with fire.' But He's going to destroy the world again. But it says, 'It grieved God at His heart that He made man.' He was not happy about what He had to do, it broke His heart. God wants to make life. He wants to save life. If you doubt that, why did Jesus come? Because He's desperate to save us. When He has to destroy the lost - no, you do not love your children more than God loves His children. It hurts God infinitely more than it would hurt any earthly parent, to have to take the life of their own child. Jesus is a lover of good. He is a lover of life. He wants to give life.

I'll tell you a quick story. When I lived up in the mountains - I told you I lived in a cave for about a year and a half. And I cooked on a fire every day. And I remember one night - I had a cat up there. I think I showed you a picture, if you were here, of my cat 'Stranger.' And I never bought cat food. Every now and then I'd throw him a little something, but he pretty much took care of himself because he was a good hunter. He was like a little lion because sometimes he'd catch these squirrels that were pretty big and there would be a fierce battle. And he always wanted to bring it to me.

But, you know, one night I was cooking my dinner and I had a little campfire there and I had a chair - a kind of a stone chair - my campfire - and Stranger had caught a little kangaroo rat. Now, you know, cats are a little bit sadistic. You know, a dog'll catch a rat and he just gulps it down. They don't even chew. But a cat, they like to play with their food as long as it's alive. They'll bat it around. They jump on it - pounce on it. They let it go, they pounce again - and kangaroo rats can really jump. Well he had caught this kangaroo rat - and it always made me feel bad because they're cute little things and - these little desert mice. And he was going through his ritual of pouncing on the thing and letting it go.

And I remember one time, Stranger - he caught a mouse and he was beating the thing up and I thought, 'Oh, please put it out of its misery.' Poor thing, you know, it was still alive and quivering and an owl came down to grab the mouse. My cat jumped on this little pygmy owl. He got the owl and the mouse got

away. So there is hope. I just want you to know. Sometimes they do make it. But on this occasion - I'm going back now - mixing up my stories. There he was again, he was playing with his food. And that poor little dazed kangaroo rat, he tried to bounce and hop away and he hopped right into the fire.

Now, I - it never fails to get a gasp from the audience when I tell that story. Here you are, I'm telling you about this little mouse that went into the fire and it just breaks your hearts, doesn't it? That little thing. Just the idea of that little rat suffering. Now, it seemed like a long time, but I watched it. You know, it squeaked and writhed for probably two or three seconds and then it stopped. And it probably even hurts you to think about that. A mouse. You don't want it to happen to a mouse. And yet, many Christians believe that God's going to do that and much worse to humans forever. Think about that. That's just - it's amazing, but - and, you know, if you say anything against it people say, 'You don't believe the Bible.' Sure you do. Now there are some verses that are confusing and we're going to get to those.

Question #13: Doesn't the Bible phrase 'unquenchable fire' indicate that the fire never goes out? Well, no. What does it mean to quench? Quench is a verb that means 'extinguish.' Let me give you an example. Interpret the Bible with the Bible. There's a rule. Let the Bible be its own expositor. It doesn't contradict itself. You can read, for instance, in Matthew chapter 3, verse 12, it says, "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up" - what does 'burn up' mean? It's gone. - "He will burn up the chaff" - speaking of the wicked - "with unquenchable fire."

That means no one is going to be able to extinguish the fire that God is going to use to punish the wicked. Have you ever seen - a house catches on fire - if, Heaven forbid, a person's clothes catch on fire while they're cooking. You quickly - you quench it. But there'll be nobody quenching in the lake of fire.

Another example - I'll give you two of them - Revelation - I'm sorry - Jeremiah 17:27 - this is before the destruction of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet Jeremiah warned them, "But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then I will kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." There you've got it again. God says, through His prophet, that if they did not repent, that the gates of Jerusalem would be burned with unquenchable fire. They did not repent. Nebuchadnezzar came - the gates were burned with unquenchable fire - nobody put it out. Burnt them up.

Are they still burning today? No, it just means there would be nobody to put it out. Again, you can look here: "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into Hell fire - where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" Does anyone go - if you get the dump burning, that's actually a good thing. It just keeps the gasses down. It smolders. You don't have to worry about a volcano that is constantly spitting out lava - they usually don't blow because the pressure's always being relieved. And if a dump is just burning the gases all the time and burning the trash, it keeps the levels down. They used to let their dumps burn. They guarded them. Made sure the fire didn't spread.

Any of you ever drive across Texas? Texas is a big state. I used to live in Texas. And I remember once - it takes you a whole day just to drive across half of it. I remember just going down this endless road somewhere and I saw this sign, it said, 'The sun has riz.' I said, 'What does that mean?' A mile later I saw another sign, it says, 'The sun has set.' 'What?' And I went a little further and it said, 'And I am still in Texas yet.' But every ten miles in Texas they've got a town because they used to be farming communities and the farms could, you know, only handle 160 acres back then before it got all mechanized and - and all the towns had their own dump. And all the farmers had 55-gallon cans at their house that were cut off and they'd throw their farm trash in there. They'd burn it and every now and then they'd take the barrel and go - throw it in the dump. And they'd go back and, inevitably, one of them still had something smoldering in there and I remember one time, driving across Texas, and I could see two or three towns. I knew where they were because of the - there was no wind that day - all the little wispy columns of the

dumps burning were rising up out of sight forever and ever - 'the smoke ascendeth up forever and ever.' That just means out of sight. It doesn't mean 'forever and ever the smoke keeps ascending.'

Are we going to sit on the walls of the new Jerusalem and look out at the wicked burning through ceaseless ages - eating popcorn for entertainment? That's some idea that some people think that, you know, God has a torture chamber somewhere where, you know, you can pay admission and you get to watch the wicked burn. Your enemies - yep, they're still burning forever and ever and ever. No. When it says that 'The fire is not quenched,' it simply means there are not going to be any firemen in Hell. That there is nobody going around - no firefighters putting out the fire. Nobody extinguishing the fire. They are going to burn, uninterrupted, until they are consumed. That's the word that is used. If you quench a fire before it stops - you put out a log before it's burnt up, you can burn it again later. God is saying what happens to the wicked is there's no essence left. It is burnt up. Matter of fact, Malachi 4, 'Leaves them neither root nor branch.' Nothing is left.

Question #14: Doesn't the phrase 'everlasting fire' mean 'unending?'

Now we've got the word 'unquenchable' - we explained that. What about 'everlasting.' Let's find out what the word means, again, letting the Bible interpret itself. Jude 7, we read where Peter says it, now here where Jude says it, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah... Are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The fire that burned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah - burnt them up. There is nothing left anymore. Now, the picture you see there on the screen is actually - that's not Sodom. I think that's a Nacine village. I just want to be accurate. It is by the Dead Sea, but that's the north end of the Dead Sea. The region of Sodom and Gomorrah is just piles of ash and mounds and hills and dirt. There's nothing there because it was burnt with eternal fire.

I like this guitar - wooden guitar. I've had it for, I guess the camera can't see it, I better hold up the guitar so you know what it is I'm talking about. I bought this about thirty years ago. It's got a lot of memories. Its starting to fade. It's made out of wood. If I should toss it in the fire it would be burnt. That fire would be an eternal fire because I would never be able to recover this guitar again. It'd be gone. The effect of the fire is eternal. There is no parole. There's no reprieve. There's no resurrection for my guitar. It is gone. The results of the fire of the wicked are eternal. That's what it's saying. It's not saying that forever and ever - just comprehend that for a minute.

Think about - think about what it really means. I mean, can you imagine how horrific the teaching is that says that people are going to blister and shriek and writhe and burn? Do you have any idea? That means that a person, you know, and some preachers preach it this way - try and scare their congregations. Burning in Hell - a thousand years go by. They manage to swim to the surface of the molten fire and brimstone and they cry out, 'Lord, how long?' And He plunges them back down and says, 'You've not even begun.' Million years go by and they said, 'How long?' Pushes him back, 'You've not even begun.' Some of you have probably heard sermons like this - or at least bordering on this. And, you know, everybody's terrified.

Oh, I forgot to show you this picture. Sodom and Gomorrah - this is the lowest place on Earth is the Dead Sea - 1,300 feet below sea level. Let me tell you a story real quick. I was driving across Texas - another time - I used to live in Texas. I had a little Mazda GLC and I saw this family was stranded on the side of the road so I pulled over to see if I could help them because, you know, it's way out in the country. And it was a pastor - father, mother, two girls - and I used to do mechanic work. I would - I did mechanic work down to the crankshaft and up again. And so I looked at the car and I said, 'It looks like your alternator is out' - because his battery kept dying. It wouldn't even fire the plugs. And it was Christmas eve. I said, 'Tell you what. Let me tow you back to our house and we'll see what we can do to help you out - no hotels around. And that was a funny sight because here I've got my little California, you know, Japanese Mazda GLC and I'm towing this great big Texas - you know, because they had no small cars back then in Texas. The thing was like a football field.

And so I towed it to my house and managed to find the parts. I said, 'I can fix it for you tomorrow.' They spent the night with us. And in the process of talking - he was a Baptist pastor - a Spanish pastor - nice guy. We talked about this subject and I shared with him the Scriptures that I'm sharing with you. And he became very quiet and he said, 'You know, Brother Doug,' - he said, 'I've seen these verses before and I know that if you go by these verses it does really look like that Hell doesn't last forever.' But he kind of looked right and left and he said, 'If I was to tell that to my church they wouldn't come anymore.' I said, 'Do you really think that they're only coming because they're afraid they're going to burn if they don't?' Is that why people come to church? Is it fire insurance? Shouldn't we be coming to church because we love Jesus and we want to worship Him? I mean, but yet some people have tried to scare people into church. People that come to church for that reason, that's the whole wrong reason. You want to be?

Would you want to be in a marriage because you're afraid you're going to be tortured if you don't stay? We hear about that every now and then, you know, people that are terrified about leaving. Is that why we go to church? Is God this, you know, galactic, abusive spouse that if we leave He's going to torment us? I mean, can you take someone and shake them by the throat and say, 'Love Me or I'm going to burn you?' Does that work very well? That's not what God's saying. God is saying, 'Sin is a deadly, contagious disease. I love you. I don't want you to perish. But the disease is going to take you if you don't come to Me. He'll have no alternative. He can't let it spread among His other children in the universe. It's going to break His heart, but the wicked will be punished. There is a lake of fire, but it doesn't burn forever and ever.'

Question #15: When Revelation 20, verse 10 says that the wicked will be tormented 'for ever and ever,' doesn't that indicate endless time? Now this is one of the verses that I will admittedly say causes people some concern. Again, let the Bible interpret itself. The word 'forever' - when we're talking about eternal life, of course it means eternal life. You read it in context, it talks about, like the ceaseless ages - we know that it goes on. But look in the Bible and you'll find other examples where the word 'forever' is used and it is clearly not talking about endless time. Jonah, when he was swallowed by the great fish or the whale, in chapter 2, verse 6 - he prayed from the belly of the fish - he said, "The earth with her bars was about me forever." Now how long was he there? We all know. Three days and three nights - it's what it says in Jonah 1:17. Do you think it felt like forever? I'm sure it did for Jonah, but it wasn't.

Now look, I'm going to quickly go through some Scriptures - no pictures, just some scriptures up here because I want you to catch this. Revelation 14, verse 11, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever..." What does this expression 'forever and ever' mean? You go now to Exodus 21, verse 6, it says that you could have a Hebrew slave. At the end of six years, if your slave loved you and he wanted to stay, you went through this ritual and it said, "He will serve him for ever." How long did that mean? Until he died. When Hannah brought Samuel to the temple, she said, he will "...there abide for ever." How long did that mean? Until he died. In 1 Samuel 1:28 she explains it herself and says, "...as long as he liveth." The term 'for ever' meant 'for the remainder of your existence.'

So when it talks about the wicked burning forever and ever, the word there used in Greek is eon. You ever heard someone say, 'I haven't seen them in eons?' Does that mean forever or just a long, unspecified period of time? The reason the Greek New Testament writers used that word 'eon' there is because everybody burns a different period of time based upon their judgment. There's varying intensity, varying times, but they're not going to burn forever. I don't know how long it - you know, the devil - when it talks about day and night - if anyone deserves that it's him, right? 'For ever and ever' is a biblical expression which means 'until the end of the age,' not necessarily an infinite, unending length of time.

Question #16: After sin and sinners are destroyed, what will Jesus do for His people? You can read here in 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 13, "Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." There's no more pain there. You read in Revelation 21,

verse 4, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Behold, I make all things new." God says. Is God going to immortalize Satan and sinners in a torture chamber somewhere in the cosmos? No, not their bodies, not their souls. He is going to make all things new. There are no holdovers, no chance of the devil escaping again.

Question #17: Will the sin problem ever rise again? No, you don't have to worry about the devil escaping from maximum security. It tells us in the book of Nahum 1, verse 9, "Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Praise God. This terrible interruption in God's perfect universe for the last 6,000 years is going to demonstrate, for all eternity, that God is love and no one will ever have to doubt His love again. That's good news. Don't you believe?

Question #18: What penetrating question does Job ask? The book of Job - oldest book in the Bible. He says, in Job chapter 4, verse 17, "Shall mortal man be more" - we're mortal - "shall mortal man be more just than God?" We would not do that to our dog. We would not do that to a mouse - we found out tonight - most of us. And yet, some people believe that God is going to do it. What is going to happen? Is there a hellfire? Is there? Yes. Is it burning yet? No. Does it burn forever? What does the Bible say will happen to the wicked? They are consumed - these are Bible words - they are devoured, they are burnt up, they perish, never shall they be anymore. What other language is God going to use to explain this? He wants to make it as clear as it can be. And the reason it's important to understand this subject, friends, is because God wants us to trust Him. God wants us to love Him.

Yes, we're to revere and honor God and fear Him in that respect, but He doesn't want us to live our lives in terror. The Bible says, 'The fearful will be cast into the lake of fire.' He doesn't want us to live by fear. He wants us to live by faith, amen? And He wants you to have that kind of a love relationship with Him. I was so thankful when I learned this truth about God's love. And He wants you to believe in His love too.

I would like to invite John to come out with Kelly and we're going to pray with you in just a moment. And I'd like you to just listen to this beautiful song - one of my favorite songs - just we only have time for probably one verse of it, but it speaks of that wonderful love of God.

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell,
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell,
The guilty pair bowed down with care,
God gave his son to win.
His erring child, he reconciled
And pardoned from his sin.
The love of God how rich and pure,
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

Amen. More than anything God wants you to be ready when Jesus comes. God so loved you that He gave His son that you should not have to perish but have everlasting life. He wants you to live. Everything God does is good, good, very good.

But He can't force you. He's created all of His intelligent creatures in His image, with a free will. You get to choose. He says, 'Come unto me. He stands at the door and He knocks and you're - you're the one that has the door knob. There's no door knob on His side, you must open the door if you hear His voice.

Do you want to open that door now, friends and say 'Lord, I think I can love and trust a just God like this with my life?'" Maybe you've had a distorted concept of who this God is. He wants you to know now that He is a God of love. He is a God of justice. He is going to be fair in the judgment. But there still are only two rewards: life and death. Jesus wants you to choose life. Is that your desire, friends? Let me pray with you.

Dear Father, I am so thankful for this truth that set me free so that I know that You're a God that I can love. You are a God of compassion and mercy and tender pity. You are not a sadist. You are not cruel. And I pray that if there are some who are struggling with this presentation, that they'll only find the answers in the Bible. I pray, Lord, that You'll make the truth very clear and that we'll - it'll help us to get a new picture of Your goodness and how that we can trust You.

If there are some that are going through struggles right now about what it means to surrender and trust our lives to you, give them the courage to do that. I pray You continue to bless this study - these meetings. Pour out Your spirit, transform us, and help us be ready for Your return because we believe You're coming soon. And we pray in Jesus' Name, amen.

Now listening friends, when is our next meeting? Tuesday. You want to make sure and come Tuesday night because we've got a very special presentation. We're going to be talking about the longest time prophecy in the Bible. It's going to be a great in-depth Bible study from the prophecies of Daniel. We'll be touching on the prophecies of Revelation, talking about the ark of the covenant - fascinating. It's still not too late for you to bring a friend and we hope that you'll also tell them they can tune in online and watch through the internet. God bless you.

We'll see you next meeting - Tuesday night.