

HOW AND WHEN WILL SATAN DIE?¹

By Paul Penno Jr.

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Many have had the general idea that Satan will never die. They assume that evil will continue forever. Millions believe in a kind of “dualism,” an idea that both good and evil need to balance each other. There must therefore be a good God and a bad Devil, keeping a kind of tension between them for ever and ever.

Satan wants people to think this, because it puts God in a bad light. He appears too weak to handle the problem of evil, and will never be able to conquer it. And of course if evil is too strong for God, He and Satan strike a kind of bargain between them, each to coexist forever with the other, like the rich and the poor in modern society.

Some even think that Satan is a member of God’s staff, employed to manage hell. In fact, millions of Christians have this idea. Some religions have tended to regard evil as something eternally entrenched. Some believe that evil is produced by “the evil divinity” who is independent of God, who was created good but became bad. They had no idea of his ever coming to an end. The best they could think was that the good God drove the bad one away, but he keeps coming back and cannot be destroyed. Some believe that ultimately all good and evil come from God and are therefore eternal. In so many traditional religions there is not even a concept of the total

eradication of Satan and evil from the universe. Likewise, popular Christianity has no such idea.

The Bible is unique in that it proclaims the “good news” of the total eradication of Satan and sin. This is the Day of Atonement truth. When Christ cried out “It is finished!” on the cross, He pronounced the death sentence on Satan and sin. But it was never God’s intention that a single human being should share that death sentence with Satan. The “everlasting fire [is] prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). Unfortunately there are those who choose to follow Satan, and they will therefore by choice share his fate.

To know the “good news” of what is coming is like having a light on a dark stormy night when you travel a road you’ve never been on before. If you have ever been lost on a strange road at night with strange people you feared and wild animals about, you have wished with all your heart you could have a lamp to light your way. Peter says, “We are even more confident of the message proclaimed by the prophets. You will do well to pay attention to it, because its like a lamp shining in a dark place until the Day dawns and the light of the morning star shines” (2 Peter 1:19, G.N.B.). And few know peace in their hearts. You can see the unhappy faces everywhere. To know the good news will lift a heavy burden from many discouraged hearts!

Satan bound for one thousand years.

We find the end of Satan and sin revealed for us in Revelation 20. It is so straight-forward that it doesn’t seem possible to misunderstand.

¹ 2 Peter 1:19. 421, 303.

An angel comes down from heaven and lays hold on Satan and binds him "in chains" for 1000 years, locking him up in a desolate condition following the return of Jesus: "The slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground" (Jeremiah 25:33). Revelation says that His coming will be with "a great earthquake, and as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great" (Revelation 16:18).

The prophet Jeremiah saw the ruined earth in vision: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end" (Jeremiah 4:23-27).

The reason there is "no man" is that all the wicked have been "slain by the brightness" of Christ's coming (see 2 Thessalonians 2:8), and all the righteous have been taken to heaven with Christ when He comes (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). Satan is left a prisoner in this desolate, ruined place. Can we think of a worse punishment? The "chains" are explained by Peter as

"chains of darkness" (2 Peter 2:4). But the condition is not to last forever; the angel is to bind "him for a thousand years. . . After that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:2, 3).

When do these thousand years begin?

John tells us in Revelation 20 that some other very important event happens at the same time that Satan is bound. The righteous dead are resurrected. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

It is on the command of the voice of the archangel, and "with the trump of God" that "the dead in Christ shall rise (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16). "This is the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5). At the same time those who are living when Christ returns will "be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Thus all who have believed in Christ, both the resurrected and those alive at His coming and whose bodies have been changed, are taken to be "with Christ" for a thousand years. The second coming of Christ marks the beginning of Satan's imprisonment for the same time. No one is left alive on earth for him to tempt or annoy. He has nothing to do for this long period but to wander around

this ruined earth in darkness. This ruined earth is the “bottomless pit” where Satan is bound.

Instead of having a “do-nothing” holiday, those who are saved will be engaged in a work of “judgment . . . given to them.” The Bible reveals that God is not an autocrat forcing his rule on his subjects, but One who shares his government with His people. “Henceforth I call you not servants,” the Lord Jesus says, “for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15). He invites His people “to be with me in my throne, even as I . . . am set down with My Father in His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

The apostle Paul describes the special work of judgment that will be given to the saints during the thousand year period. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3).

The kingdom of God will not be a colonialist regime where important decisions are made with the people excluded from participation. “Behold, the tabernacle [dwelling] of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people” (Revelation 21:3). God’s people will be given the task of deciding the fate of Satan and his fallen angels, together with those humans who have chosen to join them in their rebellion against the government of God.

There will be no hasty decisions taken—they will have a thousand years to consider everything carefully.

It is important that sin is totally eradicated; this will require that every question be cleared up that could arise later and cause doubt or misunderstanding. Sin is alienation from God, and if anyone thinks he still has reason to doubt the goodness and fairness of God, sin could rise up again “the second time.” And if God ignores his people’s questions and makes them shut up and keep their questions to themselves, resentment and fear would smolder beneath the surface and later erupt into flame. If this should happen, the whole rebellion of sin would start up over again, and Christ would have died in vain. The prophet Nahum says that “He will make an utter end, and affliction shall not rise up the second time” (Nahum 9).

Wise rulers on this earth believe that an informed people is necessary for a stable government and society. Therefore they foster freedom of the press so that information can be published. In this way the public take part in a constant process of “judgment.” Every citizen of God’s coming Kingdom will be fully informed by participation in “judgment.” And when the thousand years are finished, every one will be deeply and thoroughly loyal to Him and to His principles.

At present “we see through a glass, darkly” and there are many mysterious things in this life we cannot yet understand. For example, why we have suffered so much trouble; why tyrants and wicked people have prospered and oppressed the poor and the humble, why God has permitted such an unequal distribution of

this earth's wealth; why wars and famines have been permitted to go on and on.

But when this "judgment" is finished, every question will be answered, and all will join in saying, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear [reverence] thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3, 4).

There is another merciful reason for these thousand years of judgment. Suppose some loved one or friend who we thought was a "saint" does not awaken in the first resurrection. We wonder why. All we ever knew was what we saw in the outward life, and we cannot understand why this person is not present. The Lord will show us the books of record which contain the full story. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2). We shall be satisfied!

The judgment is part of the heavenly Day of Atonement, and final cleansing of the sanctuary. In the "shadow" sanctuary on earth, the high priest performed a ceremony on the annual Day of Atonement that prefigured this judgment. Two goats were selected, one—"the Lord's goat" that was slain as a sin offering, a type of Christ; the other was left alive, the "scapegoat," a type of Satan. At the close of the Day of

Atonement, the high priest symbolically carried all the sin that had been transferred by repentance to the sanctuary, and laid them upon the scapegoat. This taught the lesson that in the end Satan will be seen as responsible for all the evil he tempted the righteous to commit. He alone is the instigator of sin.

Then the scapegoat was banished to a lonely place in the wilderness and left to perish, never again to return to the camp of Israel. (See Leviticus 16:5-22). So Satan will eventually come to an end.

When the entire universe is satisfied that God's management of the sin problem has been absolutely fair, the thousand years will come to a close.

What will end the thousand years?

The Lord will not execute judgment on Satan and the lost until they themselves confess their guilt and the justice of their sentence. Thus no question will remain in anyone's mind as to whether or not God has been fair. What happens at the end of the thousand years demonstrates God's wisdom and mercy.

First, the wicked dead are resurrected, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:5, 8). One might wonder if Satan himself would be converted during his thousand years of captivity; no, he demonstrates his same old character: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle" (Rev. 20:7, 8).

If anyone in the vast universe of God had expected that Satan would change his ways, he will see for himself that Satan is determined to rebel right up to the last minute. With the resurrected wicked all around him he goes to work again telling lies, “to deceive the nations.”

He is angry, because he is frustrated and defeated. What especially angers him is the sight of the beautiful Holy City, the New Jerusalem, “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). In that city are all the righteous who by faith have escaped Satan’s snare. Full of hatred and rebellion he whips up the resurrected wicked to consider that they have a right to that Holy City: he gathers “them together to battle.” “And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city” (Revelation 20:9).

What an army Satan leads! Two amazing things are clearly demonstrated for all to see. (1) Satan is completely unrepentant and still deceives; (2) *all* the resurrected wicked are fully willing to believe Satan’s deceptions and to follow him wherever he leads the way in rebellion. They too are completely unrepentant.

This emphasizes an important truth: It is not possible for a person’s character to be changed after death. The Bible says nothing about any further probation or second chance to repent after this life is over. The word “purgatory” is nowhere found in the Bible. What the Bible teaches is that “now is the

accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This is not because God has little patience. The reason is that no one *can* repent except in this time of probation while the Holy Spirit leads to repentance. Our choice in this life fixes our character for all eternity. The judgment determines who is “accounted worthy” to have part in the “first resurrection,” before the second coming of Christ. When Jesus says, “Behold I come quickly,” it has already been settled that “he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Revelation 22:12, 11). Sad words! But when the wicked come up in the second resurrection, they demonstrate for all to see that they are “unjust . . . and . . . filthy still.”

The End of Satan and sin

The Bible says that Satan and the lost will join in confessing the lordship of Christ and His justice: “It is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11).

Jesus told the people who rejected and crucified Him, “say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39). As Satan leads the wicked to surround the Holy City in a final “battle” to gather them to the war of that great day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:14), God manifests His glory to them.

The wicked see God’s people safe inside the New Jerusalem and themselves forever outside:

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last” (Luke 13:28-30).

What a group will be in Satan’s throng, looking into the City from the wrong side! “Outside the city are the perverts and those who practice magic, the immoral and the murderers, those who worship idols and those who are liars both in words and deeds” (Revelation 22:15; G.N.B.).

All of us are by nature sinners. The saved inside the City will be former sinners *redeemed*, and the lost outside will be sinners *unredeemed*.

If the “iniquity of us all” was laid on Christ; if He “died for our sins;” if He “abolished death” by His sacrifice; if He “was wounded for our transgressions” and was “bruised for our iniquities,” *it follows that He paid the “unwaived,” “undeferred,” “undelayed” penalty of every man’s sin.* This is the ABC of the plan of salvation. Ellen White seems clear.

“In consequence of limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. . . . The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father’s law in punishing the transgressor, in that he consented to suffer the penalty of the law himself. . . . [What] ended the life of Christ upon the cross . . . was the crushing weight of

the sins of the world. . . . The sin of the world, with all its terribleness, was felt to the utmost by the Son of God. . . . The Redeemer drains the mysterious cup even to its dregs. The separation that sin makes between God and man [the horror of the second death] was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary.”²

Christ died the second death; He died its equivalent. In other words, He corporately identified Himself with “every man” in that “anguish of the lost,” the indescribable alienation from life or joy or light which Christ “tasted” for “every man.” “The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart.”³ Thus He was “made to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21).⁴

This word “made” is not conditional. This is shocking to many Seventh-day Adventists, but it is true that Christ has actually accomplished something for every human being. He has identified Himself intimately with the deepest recess of every person’s secret soul—the ever-present yet buried fear of eternal death. He has lifted that condemnation, making present life and its happiness possible.⁵ Thus He “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John

² 2T 200-215.

³ DA 752, 753.

⁴ This is a unique Adventist truth because most Evangelical churches believe in the natural immortality of the soul, a doctrine which blinds them to the true nature of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

⁵ Cf. Heb. 2:14, 15. The Bible does not teach Universalism. The sinner can despise and reject Christ if he chooses.

1:9). Jesus corporately identified Himself with “every man” in that second death, “the anguish of the lost.”

Christ’s sacrifice explains why there is no need for any human soul to die that second death—except for his unbelief.⁶ What will make the anguish of the lost so totally complete will be the full realization at last that He did die for their sin, He did pay their debt! They will see their own second death as totally unnecessary except for their hard-hearted unbelief: “In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned.”⁷

The cross defines unbelief as far more than a passive neutrality, a sitting on the fence, or a human oversight which we define as “neglect.” The lost will see that their unbelief was active disbelief, a deliberate choice to cast contempt upon the sacrificial love of the Son of God.⁸ It seems that it is easy to misunderstand the profound nature of unbelief. The lost will see that their unbelief was active disbelief, a hard-hearted,

deliberate choice to despise the sacrificial love of the Son of God.

Christ’s atonement is infinitely more than we have been ready to understand. Every human being is involved: “Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, stands between Satan and *every soul*. . . . The sins of *everyone* who has lived upon the earth were laid upon Christ, testifying to the fact that no one need be a loser in the conflict with Satan.”⁹ What Good News! And how the world hungers to hear it!

This is not to deny that the lost will indeed die the second death. In despising, rejecting, *dis*-believing what Christ did, they “counted the blood of the covenant . . . an unholy thing, and . . . [did] despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). This is the true dimension of their unbelief or disbelief.¹⁰ They will suffer the “wages of sin” because by repeated choice they have taken back upon themselves the sin Christ died for, and retrieved the condemnation and punishment which He has already borne for them. God does not put them in double jeopardy. If people could only see this truth *now*, what a difference it would make with many! The 1888 message of the cross is “the third angel’s message in verity.” The “loud cry” message, “Be ye reconciled to God,” will make this clear to the hungry world that is darkened by a false concept of God’s character.

⁶ This is denied in *Remember*, p. 156. Unbelief causes disobedience, but the final judgment of condemnation is for their unbelief (John 3:17-21). Waggoner teaches this in *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 13, 14, and in *Waggoner on Romans*, p. 101.

⁷ DA 58; GC 668. Unbelief is far more than passive neutrality, even as true faith is far more than passive acquiescence. See *Remember*, p. 156, etc.

⁸ This is further explicated in GC 543, 668.

⁹ RH, May 23, 1899.

¹⁰ For Waggoner’s understanding of this truth, see *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 11, 14, 61, 66, 67; *Waggoner on Romans*, pp. 101, 144, 166, 172. For Jones’s, see RH, April 17, 1894.

What will finally happen to the lost? Would it be just and merciful of the Lord to perpetuate the misery of the lost for eternity? Would it be to His glory to keep lost people alive miraculously, while they scream and yell and curse in painful agony in perpetual consciousness? Could God be more cruel?

Even today it is hard to enjoy a sumptuous meal at an expensive restaurant if you know there are starving people begging in the street outside. Could the righteous really enjoy the delights of heaven knowing that outside the walls of the city there are lost people writhing in torment for eternity?

The Bible says that the Lord is both just and merciful. He says, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), even “the second death” (Revelation 20:14). What we call “death” the Bible calls a “sleep” because it will end in resurrection—either the first or the second. But the “second death” is different: there will never be a resurrection again! It is eternal death.

Revelation continues the story of the end of the thousand years in complete harmony with all that the Bible says about the punishment of the lost. “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” (Revelation 20:9). “The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away” (Psalm 37:20). “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that

cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . The wicked . . . shall be ashes under the souls of your feet” (Malachi 4:1, 3).

Does the Bible elsewhere contradict itself? Are there some texts that say the wicked will suffer conscious torment in eternal life? No, the Bible does not contradict itself. Only by reading into the Bible one’s personal prejudices is it possible to teach an ever-burning hell for the lost. Note carefully: “And these [the wicked] shall go away into everlasting *punishment*” (Matthew 25:26). It does not say everlasting *punishing*! The *punishment* is the second death.” Again: “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever” (Revelation 14:11). It does not say that their “torment” endures forever, but that “the smoke” goes up forever; in other words, the final conclusion of sin will be an eternal fact known to the entire universe.

The “everlasting punishment” that the lost will suffer is said to be “everlasting fire” (Matthew 25:46, 41), or “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12). An unquenchable fire is one that cannot be put out until it has done its work. When something has been burned up, the fire goes out.

We have an example of “everlasting fire” before our eyes: Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7).

We may travel to the Dead Sea and see the sites of these wicked cities that perished by “eternal fire,” but the fire is not raging today. It was eternal *in its consequences*. There is no city in the world named Sodom or Gomorrah today. They were eternally destroyed.

We distort the meaning of that passage in Revelation if we conclude that the anguish of the lost will be the Fahrenheit or Centigrade temperature of the fire. The second death is not merely physical torture. The pain will be the judgment of verse 12 when the sacred books are “opened” and the lost finally see themselves as they have been all along. The horror of self-condemnation that results will be unimaginable, far worse than fire.

Does God inflict this torture on these unfortunate people? Some who love the Bible say yes, some say no. For the lost, it will in reality be their own conscience that can’t help but see the contrast between their sinful character and the character of Christ. In that final hour, God doesn’t need to press home on those people the truth: they will see it in the most stark reality they have ever known. The Great Controversy says they will be horrified to sense their own judgment (pp. 666-668). They will welcome the fire that will end their soul agony.

Has anyone in the past ever felt that same agony of soul? Yes, the Son of God felt just what they will feel. It was when He cried out on His cross, “My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46). So terrible was His anguish that He felt the curse of God (Gal.

3:13). He was “made to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). Because He endured this ultimate level of suffering, it is right that He be acclaimed “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The new earth—good news!

The fire “out of heaven” that destroys Satan and his followers purifies this sin-cursed earth. “The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . All these things shall be dissolved . . . The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (2 Peter 3:10-12). All the garbage, junk and filth, will consume away: the saloons, casinos, entertainment dens, slums—all will be cleansed by fire. But this will not be the end: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

The Lord tries again and again to save us. He is pleading in the most sublime, compassionate language, saying to every human soul, “‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?’” (Ezek. 33:11). Love could not be more eloquent, or more persistent.

How will the lost feel when at last they actually see the face of Him whom they have persistently resisted and rejected? For those who have urged and supported the mark of the beast, just to look in His

eyes will itself be torment “with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 14:9-11). The original language expresses the idea of their beholding in a flash the awful reality of their having rejected the One who suffered hell in order to save them. They can’t stand it. The horror of their final realization of guilt tortures every cell of their souls.

The Lord never intended that the sight of His loving face should do that to anyone. While it is true that “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29), it is only to sin that the revelation of His love is so destructive. Thus, if a human being persistently clings to any sin as a vine clings to a tree, the physical sight of Him who is love incarnate must also be instant destruction.

But Jesus promises that “the pure in heart . . . shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). They “shall dwell with the devouring fire, . . . with everlasting burnings” (Isa. 33:14). As Christ walked in Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace with the three Hebrew youth who believed Him, so He will save those physically who have already permitted Him as Saviour to save them spiritually from sin.

“Affliction shall not rise up the second time” (Nahum 1:9). “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isaiah 32:17, 18).

Glory to God! He has been just and merciful in His dealings with the problem of sin and Satan’s rebellion. Not by force of arms and military might but

by love revealed in a cross, He has triumphed to all eternity.

Let’s begin now practicing to sing in that mighty choir so we can join in the chorus: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).