

The Beast was Captured, and with Him the False Prophet

19: 20

DIG: Why will the antichrist's body never see burial? What is ironic about that? What is annihilationism? How does it relate to this verse? What does Jesus add to our understanding about this horrible place?

REFLECT: Do you think that the Lord is too kind to torture anyone for eternity in the lake of fire, no matter what it is they have done? What is the alternative? What would that say about God's righteousness? Can ADONAI tolerate sin? What would this do to Christ's sacrificial offering on the cross?

The beast and the false prophet will be punished for all eternity. During the seventy-five day interval the antichrist, or the beast, will be captured and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them will be thrown alive into the lake of fire and burning sulfur.

The Holy Spirit teaches us that the antichrist will be thrown alive into the lake of fire. Earlier we learned that he will be killed as one of the first casualties of the Second Coming (Second Thessalonians 2:8). Thus, this verse requires that he be resurrected during the seventy-five day interval (see Ey - The Seventy-Five Day Interval), and then thrown alive into the lake of fire. It is for this reason that Isaiah 14:20 declares that his body will never be buried.

The fact that his body will never see burial is very ironic. As we will see later, the first resurrection applies to the resurrection of the righteous, although it comes in stages. The term the second resurrection applies to the resurrection of all the wicked, this too, will come in stages. Jesus was the first fruits of the first resurrection. The irony is that the counterfeit son will be allowed to act out the counterfeit role perfectly by becoming the first fruits of the second resurrection (see Fn - The Second Resurrection). But the result of his resurrection will be the lake of fire.

The false prophet - the counterfeit Holy Spirit, who will have a counterfeit gift of miracles by which he will do his work of deception, calling men to worship the antichrist, to take upon themselves the mark of the beast and to worship his image - he, too, will be resurrected after the antichrist and thrown alive into the lake of fire and burning sulfur. For the first thousand years that the lake of fire will be inhabited, the beast and the false prophet will be there all by themselves.⁴²²

The TaNaKh makes reference to these two prophets. First, **Isaiah** mentions that **Topeth**, or hell, was already prepared for the Assyrian king of his day. **Topeth**, which is the same as the Valley of Ben Hinnon, was a valley on the southern side of Jerusalem. In Greek, it was called the Valley of Gehenna. It was a place where human sacrifices were offered by the kings of Judah to the god Molech (**Second Kings 23:10; Second Chronicles 28:3, 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31-32, 19:4-6; Ezekiel 16:20-21**). The people of Jerusalem dumped their garbage there and burned it. Therefore, it was a place of continual burning. Later, the homeless dead, with no one to claim their bodies, were thrown in **the fire**. So **Topeth** eventually became a symbol of hell (**Isaiah 30:33**). Next, **Dani'el** heard **the boastful words of the little horn**, and **he saw the antichrist, or the beast, was slain and his body thrown into the blazing fire** (**Dani'el 7:11**).

However, this is the first specific mention of **the lake of fire** in the Bible. It is the ultimate destination of Satan, his demons, and the lost (**Matthew 25:41**). **Isaiah** described it as the place where **their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched** (**Isaiah 66:24**), a description reinforced by **Christ** in the New Covenant (**Mark 9:48**). But **Yeshua** added something to **Isaiah's** description, saying it will be a place **where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth** (**Matthew 13:42**). Earlier, **John** had said that **the smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and there will be no rest day or night** (**14:11**). Apparently **the beast and the false prophet** will not die, but are sentenced to an eternity in burning hell. They will be the firstfruits of a great multitude, who will be **cursed** and sentenced **into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels** (**Matthew 25:41**).

Hell has always existed, but this will be its final form. Unlike Sh'ol or Hades, **the lake of fire** is not a temporary holding place (**Luke 16:23**), but a permanent place of incarnation and punishment. **Burning sulfur** is frequently associated with the fire of judgment (**Luke 17:29; Revelation 9:17, 14:10, 20:10**). A **lake of burning sulfur** would not only be intensely hot, but putrid and stinking as well. It will be an appropriate place for all that is sinful and wicked in the world.⁴²³

That **the beast and the false prophet** are still in **the lake of fire** a thousand years later when Satan is **thrown into it** (**20:10**) is a convincing refutation of the false doctrine of annihilationism, or the belief that when sinners die they are merely destroyed and do not face an eternity in hell. As the two most evil, vile, blasphemous people who have ever lived, it will be only fitting that they should be the first to arrive in that dreadful place. What wonderful company they will be for each other. The New Covenant is clear on the eternity of punishment for those who reject **Jesus as the Messiah** (**Matthew 13:40-42; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 3:17, 12:47-48; Revelation 14:10-11**).⁴²⁴