

Rev 26-04-05a

Good morning, welcome to the Resurrection Sunday morning services here at Grace & Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to spend this time with you this morning. Let's go to the Lord in prayer and we will begin.

Father, we are so grateful for the occasion we celebrate this morning. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, His full expression of love, sacrificial, beneficial, enabling us to have a relationship with you, to have a bright future, to live in hope. We thank you for the opportunity to go together before your throne in prayer, in intercession, in request, and that you hear and answer in wisdom and in grace.

We thank you for the passage we have before us this morning and the opportunity to celebrate the Lord Jesus' victory over death. We pray that your blessing will prevail over each heart, that the Holy Spirit will find us receptive and teachable, and that in all things the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified this morning. We ask it in His name.

Amen. If you turn now to our chapter in Revelation, we are in this interim period between the trumpets and the bowls. This is an extended rest period, if you will.

The judgments that are detailed in Revelation are separated. The seals are followed by an interregnum, then the angels who sound the trumpets, and then there is this extended interval. Then we begin in chapter 16 with the angels who pour out the bowls of God's judgment.

We are coming to the end of this extended section. There are a couple of things I want to cover, one in chapter 14 and one in chapter 15. This is something I have been waiting to cover until the present time.

It has to do in chapter 14 with the judgment from the third angel. This is the angel that precedes. You remember in chapter 14, such a fascinating structure.

There are three angels who are pictured. Then there is the Son of Man with the sharpsicle who does the grain harvest. Then you have three more angels.

The Lord Jesus is like the center lamp in a menorah. Three lead up to it, three follow it. But the third angel, beginning in verse 9, a third angel followed the first two, saying with a loud voice, If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation.

He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name. As a reminder of the symmetry here, this set of three angels leading up to the center

figure of the Son of Man, followed by the other three angels, the third of the second set corresponds to the third of the first set. So you have the angel that comes out from the temple in verse 17, has a sharp sickle, and then another angel comes out from the altar who has power over fire.

He cries with a loud voice to him who has the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and this is thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God. The winepress is trampled outside the city.

Blood comes out of the winepress up to the horse's bridles. And so you can see that the concluding section or the conclusion of this second set of angels mirrors what is spoken in the first set. In the center you have the grain, those who belong to Christ, in the tribulation period being removed from the earth before this judgment.

But I want to focus on what has fueled the belief that there is eternal conscious torment in the lake of fire for all unbelievers. And this centers on verses 10 and 11. If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, presence of the Lamb, smoke ascends forever and ever, no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, whoever receives the mark of his name.

And then that is followed by the patience of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus by way of contrast. What does it mean that the smoke ascends forever and ever and that these are tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb? It is understandable that you would take this at face value and say, well, there is unending conscious torment. The holy angels are going to surround the lake of fire.

The Lamb is going to sit there and in their presence before their face is this unending torment day and night. The smoke ascends forever and ever. I want to talk about the term forever and ever.

This is important to understand because in English, we believe that this extends into the eternal future indefinitely. That is the connotation. But in both Hebrew and Greek, these phrases indicate an indefinite period.

So let us start with Olam, O-L-A-M. This is the Hebrew term and the fundamental meaning of Olam is as far as you can see to the horizon. Or for the duration without indicating that it is an endless duration.

So as an example in Exodus chapter 21 verse 6, you have a servant who is bound to his master forever. You will remember this in Exodus 21. These are the judgments which you shall set before them.

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years. And in the seventh, he shall go out free and pay nothing. If he comes in by himself, he goes out by himself.

If he comes in married, his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife and she has born him sons or daughters, the wife and children shall be her masters. He shall go out by himself.

But if the servant plainly says, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free. Then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him Olam forever.

Now, how long is that forever? Is this into the indefinite eternal future? Obviously not. Context tells us that this is a duration that extends for the life of the servant, possibly the life of the master. There were slaves throughout history who have been set free upon the death of their master.

You have Exodus chapter 40 verse 15. I won't turn to it, but this has to do with the Levitical priesthood. And Exodus 40 15 says that this Aaronic priesthood, the sons of Aaron, is an everlasting priesthood, a priesthood of Olam.

Obviously, there is not a high priest and a Levitical priest system practicing and perpetuating the feasts and the sacrifices of Israel into the indefinite eternal future. But it is for as far as you can see, it is to the horizon of the existence of the nation of Israel, and the people of Israel. So it is for a duration that makes sense given the context, indefinitely long time.

In Genesis chapter 17 verse 8, this is the Lord speaking to Abraham. And he says that the land is given to Abraham forever. Forever.

And you would think, well, this is permanent possession that never ends. Obviously not the case. There have been any number of times where Abraham and his descendants have not been in the land, traveling to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, driven out after AD 70, gone for close to 1900 years.

So, God said, the land is given forever. In the same context where God renames Abram, he says, no longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham. For I have made you a father of many nations.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

Also, I give you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. Olam. Everlasting possession.

What about the new heavens and new earth? This earth is going to go when the elements melt

with a fervent heat, as Peter says. There will be a new heavens and a new earth. So, what does forever mean? It means for the meaningful duration of time that one would expect.

And this, of course, is also a conditional promise. So, as for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep and so on.

So, the possession of the land is said to be Olam forever. What does forever mean in that context? A fun one is to go to the book of Jonah. And you remember what happens to Jonah? And when he describes his experience in the belly of the great fish in chapter 2, verse 6, he says, I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and he answered me.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas. And the floods surrounded me, all your billows and your waves passed over me.

Then I said, I have been cast out of your sight, yet I will look again toward your holy temple. The waters surrounded me, even to my soul. The deep closed around me.

Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains. The earth with its bars closed behind me forever.

La Olam Was Jonah in the belly of the fish forever? It seemed an interminably long period of time. Have you ever been in Discomfort and it just You know, I've been sitting in this waiting room forever. When are they going to see me and give me a pain? medication I'm I'm in distress.

I'm in pressure. When will the this has just been going on forever we say So these passages are representative examples, there are many others where forever does not mean into the Eternal future without end The same thing is true. And this is our second point with ionos I own an ionos a i o n a i o n i o s ionios in greek And this means an age an era It can mean a world order For example in First corinthians chapter 2 verse 7 paul uses this We speak wisdom among those who are mature he says in verse 6 first corinthians 2 6 We speak wisdom among those who are mature yet.

Not the wisdom of this age Nor of the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing But we speak the wisdom of god in a mystery the hidden wisdom which god ordained before the ages for our glory So before the ionion If ages have a beginning they also have an end Matthew chapter 24 verse 3. You remember matthew 24 the apocalyptic Revelation that god gives to four disciples You remember? Little pop quiz question for you to whom does jesus speak the content of matthew chapter 24? It's a pretty easy guess to make if I tell you that it is only four of the 12 disciples Peter andrew james and john andrew Gets in there with the three who were on the mount of transfiguration and in the upper room when jesus raises the little child from The dead but in matthew chapter 24 verse 3 the lord jesus He is out Departed the temple his

disciples came to show him the buildings of the temple. Jesus said to them Do you not see all these things assuredly? I say to you not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down as he sat on the mount of olives the disciples came to him privately saying When will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? The end of the age the end of the ionos You find it again in romans chapter 16 verse 25. Remember romans 16 is where paul recommends those to have productive fellowship with I urge you brethren And when you get to chapter 16 verse 25 Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of jesus christ According to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began But now made manifest and by the prophetic scriptures made known to all nations According to the commandment of the everlasting god for obedience to the faith So this mystery was hidden for ages mystery of the ages now made manifest So these Are not always Into the eternal past or into the eternal future context tells us How far to take them and it is basically to the visible horizon It is an expectation that that is without end within a lifetime within a national Existence and so on When you find forever and ever this is our third point olam point one ionion point two forever and ever is Intensification it doesn't say well now i'm talking about into the indefinite future This is very common when you double something in hebrew Hashem mayim the heavens or mayim the seas the the waters Im or even elohim Which is a dual the i am ending Means there is two of a thing Um is intensification of Whatever it is during its existence.

It doesn't mean that well now it extends in forever so In greek you have ice to ionias tone ionon onto the age of the ages Or ages of the ages. It's just a superlative. It's like holy of holies or king of kings or lord of lords Uh, and it intensifies the Duration of a thing but it doesn't extend it is the point Why does this matter? Forever doesn't mean infinite duration when it comes to our passage in revelation chapter 14 There are cases where it does if you're talking about the eternal god.

He of course is infinite Uh Our salvation everlasting life has infinite duration, but these are determined by context So in Revelation in particular forever means enduring for the relevant period that is under discussion and we have a clue here in revelation 14 because If you notice they have no rest day or night, what do you know about the kingdom of the father? There is no day and night in the new heavens and new earth there is no night The lamb is the light the lamb doesn't Go dark for 12 hours out of a day And so you do not have time measured in day and night in the kingdom of the father in the eternal future So If something is going to have a duration measured in day and night it is not going to extend past The point where you have day and night You could also expect that the lamb and the holy angels are not going to spend the indefinite eternal future doing nothing But sitting on the edges of the lake of fire watching eternal punishment and unending torment And This is done in the presence and anytime you see things that take place in the presence Throughout the book of revelation. They are episodes It is not Endless the 24 elders are seated before the throne, but they're not there indefinitely The four living creatures are there but they are not fixed and immovable and and never leave these are Scenes they are episodes So The Fact that you have olam used for short

intense periods of time or Longer periods that still come to an end like the Aaronic priesthood Read the book of hebrews. The levitical priesthood is over it has been superseded by the Order of melchizedek and with the lord jesus as high priest um the experience of jonah Lasted a couple of days in the belly of the great fish, but it came to a conclusion So, uh the smoke and fire that is emblematic of judgment in revelation has Old testament roots you can turn back to isaiah chapter 34 Isaiah chapter 34 In verses 9 and 10 It is the day of the lord's vengeance in verse 8 The year of recompense for the cause of zion its streams shall be turned into pitch And its dust into brimstone its land shall become burning pitch It shall not be quenched night or day its smoke shall ascend forever From generation to generation it shall lie waste.

No one shall pass through it forever and ever Pelican and the porcupine shall possess it the owl and so on This is strong olam language but we know that this judgment is something that ends It has a duration It is intense It is profound it is complete devastation and destruction and this burning pitch representing the Implementation of judgment under the wrath of god is emphatic But it is not indefinite It has a duration So I would suggest As you think and Everyone is free to draw their own conclusions based on their own understanding of the word of god I am Offering you my understanding Based on passages like this, but in isaiah chapter 34 verses 9 and 10 You have an intense Judgment an expression of the wrath of god On rebellion on rejection of god's grace And it is put in these intensified terms But it is an intensification of the level of judgment To say forever and ever it doesn't you can't go there now and find Smoke and pitch burning and ascending into heaven At Uh Edom And basra and if you look at the context Uh in chapter 34, this is judgment on the nations But this is not going to ascend forever um, and you can read that entire context but I would look at revelation 14 11 With isaiah 34 As Context Uh Turn to revelation chapter 19 verse 3. We're not there yet but After these things john says I heard a loud voice of a great multitude to heaven saying hallelujah salvation and glory and honor and power Belong to the lord our god for true and righteous are his judgments because he has judged the great harlot Who corrupted the earth with her fornication? This is the scarlet harlot revelation 17 and so on and 18 So you get to 19 She corrupted the earth with her fornication. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants shed by her Again, they said hallelujah her smoke rises up forever and ever Now how long is babylon going to actually Smoke in destruction There's no smoking babylon mentioned anywhere during the thousand years of the millennial kingdom and certainly not in the eternal future And yet it's very powerful language here her smoke ascends forever and ever but notice it is the smoke It doesn't say The harlot burns in living conscious torment forever and ever So the smoke is a reminder The smoke is The recollection that there was a great fire You can have a fire and long after the fire has quote unquote gone out There is still smoke you have the smoky bear commercials where the gal is out with her friends camping and they're getting ready to leave and they do a superficial job of Putting out the fire and she turns into smoky bear and says you've got to pour water and stir the things and feel with the back of your hand to make sure it's cold and Then she turns back into a girl with a headband and they go traipsing off into the forest But if there is smoke That is a reminder that there had been a fire And for the smoke to arise forever and ever Means the memory of that judgment will never be forgotten Whatever

happened to those people that were on the earth that Refused the grace of god and refused the sacrificial work of the lord. Jesus christ.

Oh, I remember They were cast into the lake of fire And that poor decision Will never be forgotten and the consequence of it I would also point out that uh, we often have people who are representative and you have to look at these who take the Mark, and so on as representative of all unbelievers because the passage only says these Rejectors of the everlasting gospel that was preached uh in by the angels Remember the everlasting gospel was preached by the very first angel in verse 7 of chapter 14 Fear god give him glory for the hour of his judgment has come worship him who made heaven and earth the sea And the springs of water he is preaching the everlasting gospel on the earth to every nation tribe tongue and people in verse 6 There is opportunity The gospel is presented. It is rejected and That message is delivered during the 70th week to everyone When it is not accepted these individuals who are most clearly presented with it Are going to drink of the wine of the wrath of god in verse 10 poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever but this is a judgment of brief duration And this torment in the presence of the angels remember these judgments are angelic The trumpets are blown by angels this section in revelation chapter 14 is Perpetrated by angels even the instruction to the lord. Jesus to reap the grain is delivered by an angel And in the presence of the angels they witness what happens to those who reject the everlasting gospel of god's grace and this torment is Detailed In the seals and the trumpets and the bowls that are described in such detail here in revelation and a lot of this torment is People crying out for the rocks to fall on them the scorpions with stings in their tails and the power to hurt men for five months and so on uh, this is Uh can be viewed as a summary of all of these judgments on those who do not come under the protecting hand of god who don't have the opportunity to be Sealed and to be shielded and to be delivered So, uh The Most difficult text is going to come up in revelation 20 verse 10 When the devil is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are And quote they will be tormented day and night forever and ever Doesn't talk about unbelievers It talks about the devil talks about the first beast talks about the false prophet and The day and night Again is a clue That there won't be day and night in the eternal future the kingdom of the father but There's two observations.

I would offer and again if you want to believe in eternal conscious torment it this is my understanding which I present and am offering evidence for but believe me it is widely understood differently and Uh, we pray we ask god for insight and Go with what you know. The good thing is it's a bit academic for us because Whatever it is We're not subject to it. It does affect your understanding of god's character Do we worship and serve do we have a heavenly father Who is Interested in unending conscious torment for a segment of his creation It changes I think Inevitably your view of god that there must be a part of god that will never be satisfied And has to torment angels and Unbelieving humans Without end I don't find that to be a part of the character of god as revealed in scripture some do but Remember that revelation

2010 first it concerns the devil the beast and the false prophet and these are figures in revelation are not ordinary human beings the beast and false prophet these are Symbolic representations.

We're not real sure about these apocalyptic entities They seem to be Transcendent in the sense that they are enabled and empowered by satan But they're not an example of an ordinary human being And so this complicates making an application based on their fate they are specifically singled out Uh, and again if you look at forever and ever as intensification These are the worst of the worst in all of recorded history and so the judgment on them is depicted as the Most potent and the most profound of any judgment revealed in scripture and if you see the forever and ever and the day and night as Intensifications, how can I say how strong this judgment is? Looking at the previously noted passages Rather than trying to make a universal application to any unbeliever that they're going to share the fate of satan It it does caution us against using it though as though it would have been super easy for god to just say well, you know Unbelievers, this is their fate so we'll Uh Pause here and take our break And when we come back, we're going to conclude our study of forever uh by looking at one more passage in the new testament and Whatever the judgment is We celebrate the fact that the lord jesus has delivered us from it. It's the thing we celebrate on this resurrection sunday that Having died with him. We will be raised to live with him eternally and that is an indefinite duration Uh as long as there is a lamb of god as long as there is a lord jesus christ We will be with him We will enjoy the future kingdom of the father with all of its paradise like Attributes blessings and inheritances.

Let's pause here and take our break