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Dear Friend:

Does the scripture "and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" contradict the passage that reads "and the wicked shall be ashes under the soles of our feet?"

The Bible does NOT contradict itself! (John 10:35).

Malachi 4:3 proves that the wicked will DIE -- they will be burned up so that only ASHES remain! The soul is not immortal and there will be no eternal tormenting for the wicked! The soul is MORTAL and subject to death! But -- what is the meaning of Revelation 14:11: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever . . . ."

There is no contradiction here!

Notice that verse 8 gives the TIME SETTING of this passage. It is speaking about the impending fall of "Babylon" -- a great religious-political system which is the RESURRECTED ROMAN EMPIRE led by the symbolic harlot "woman" -- the great apostate, paganzed church falsely calling herself "Christian."

Verses 9 and 10 say: ". . . If any man worship the beast (the coming United States of Europe -- the resurrected Roman Empire) and his image (the Papacy), and receive his mark . . . he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . in the presence of the Lamb" (that is, at Christ's second coming):

Those who have a part in this church-state system of "Babylon," and who receive this frightful punishment from Almighty God, have "no rest day or night" as long as they remain in that land falling under God's wrath! They will either have to flee that area and seek God's mercy or be tormented by sulphurous fumes till they perish.

Notice that this passage does NOT say these individuals are being tormented forever in an ever-burning hell. Verse 11 says: ". . . The SMOKE of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever . . . ." It is the smoke that ascends forever. It does not say the fire burns forever, but that the smoke that is already up there continuously ascends! It happens even today whenever fires burn up, but smoke is still in the air!

This fire is on the earth, not in some "hell" away off!

So the Bible plainly teaches that flesh and blood is subject to combustion and death. Malachi 4:3 says the ashes of the wicked will finally be under the feet of the righteous. And if the wicked are forever ashes after the earth is burned, then their smoke (or ashes in the air) will remain in the atmosphere "for ever and ever." So there is no contradiction between these verses! The wicked will be DESTROYED and will die that death -- the second death -- from which there is never to be a resurrection (Rev. 20:6,14).

LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT