



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. -

Matthew 15:9

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Hell for all Eternity – What a Hell of a Thought!

Making friends on Facebook can be interesting. It can be rewarding, frustrating, frightening, irritating, fun, etc.... My son met a woman on Facebook, and now she is my daughter-in-law. That was a rewarding friendship for both of them.

About 4 ½ years ago I made friends with a man who lives in a different country. I'm not going to give names because I don't know how he and his girlfriend would feel about me using their names.

I've had some contact with his girlfriend. She and I both like to talk theologically. At some point I must have made the comment that the Bible doesn't support the teaching of an eternally burning hell where God will torture people forever and ever. A couple days ago I opened up my Facebook and found a chat message from my friend that said he had sent me an email from her and it was a list of Bible texts.

I told him I would look at it and respond which I have done. This was an interesting study for me and I've decided to share it with you. These texts she sent are a list that support the teaching of everlasting hellfire. The list from her is on top and my response is below. Sorry, but it's kinda long. Grab yourself something to drink, a cookie or two, kick your shoes off and put your feet up. Say a prayer and put on your thinking caps. As you read this decide for yourself if you believe that God will burn people for any length of time.

Girlfriend's Letter

Hope your keeping cool and keeping hydrated.

When you talk to Hannah give her these scriptures that supports everlasting hell and fire, I'm sure you could find more if need be.

Isaiah 33:14 Sinners of Zion are afraid, trembling has seized the godless: "Who among us can **live with the consuming fire?**" "Who among us can live with **everlasting burnings?**"

Matt 13:50 and throw them into the **fiery furnace**, in that place will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt 25:46 These shall go off to everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.

Mark 9:47-48 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--** 48where 'Their worm does not die and the **fire is not quenched.**'

Isaiah 66:24 "And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their **fire is not quenched**. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the **lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Luke 16:19-31

Job 12:14-15 If He tears down, it cannot be rebuilt; one He imprisons cannot be released. 15If He holds back the waters, they dry up; if He releases them, they destroy the earth.

Job 20

My Response

Say "Hi" to your Hunnybunny for me and please read then pass along my answer. I can answer this but it will take some background information first to be able to relay this in a way that hopefully the two of you can understand. And I'm adding an extra text that she

missed.

Hebrews 3: 18,19 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Let's start with the basis of what we look for when doing a Bible study. We're taught to read passages and see them through the eyes of our culture. When we do that we come up with thoughts, ideas, teachings that are incorrect. I once heard a pastor make the following statement:

God is Love. His very essence, his very being is Love, and if you ever come across a teaching that shows him to be anything less than loving or compassionate, that teaching is wrong and needs to be restudied. – Greg Boyd, Woodland Hills Church

We don't have the ability to understand the physical body of God. We can experience it but we don't understand it. According to the Bible God is Love. For him it's a noun, not a verb. Yes, he is loving and compassionate, but he IS Love. Love is what he is. Love is what he does. Period. For him to do something that is in any way less than loving is outside his character and he cannot do that. If God were to step outside his character and do something evil, then that would negate the need for a devil because God would be the devil. Satan would like us to believe this to be the case but God is no devil. He is pure, unadulterated love.

I have 2 cats. No matter how much I might wish that they would stand up on their 2 back legs and start hopping through the house like a kangaroo, it isn't going to happen. It isn't in their nature to do that. God's being, his character is Love. For him to start acting in ways that are less than loving is something that he cannot do and still be God. It is the devil who acts in ways that aren't loving then he turns around and blames God for doing the things that he himself just did. That is another study that I won't take the time to address here. The question at hand is an eternally burning fire where people are tortured by god to appease his wrath.

When we start a study with the knowledge that God is incapable of acting in any way that is less than loving, then we need to look at the teaching and ask ourselves is this teaching within the characteristics of Love? Is the act of burning someone alive forever and all eternity an act of Love or an act of extreme cruelty?

You know I was raised in the Seventh-day Adventist church. They don't believe in an eternally burning hell because the act of burning someone alive forever and all eternity is not an act of love. They teach that god will burn you in hell only for as long as is

necessary to atone for your sins. Somehow that is supposed to be a more loving picture of God than a god who will burn someone alive forever and ever and ever. But let's be honest about this. Have you ever accidentally touched a lit match? How did it feel for that brief moment it touched your skin? It hurt immensely, didn't it?

Years ago I lived in Mississippi. My x-husband worked for the VA Hospital in Jackson and when he would come home he would get on the interstate and head south. We lived in Florence. One afternoon when he was on his way home from work there was a fatal car crash that he and some of his coworkers witnessed. Someone Mike knew was beside the car when the crash happened. The car immediately burst into flames. This coworker reported to Mike how he had heard the screams of the man who was trapped alive inside that burning car. Reportedly he screamed in such agony that the witnesses believed they would never forget the nightmarish screaming they heard. The man was burned alive and died pretty quick.

Now imagine that lit match I mentioned earlier that just touched your skin only a brief moment then think of this poor man who was trapped inside his car when it burst into flames. How must he have felt? For him, death was a blessing. To have continued on in a state of being torched alive would be an act of more than extreme cruelty. Only a vicious, malevolent, deranged, bloodthirsty killer would be capable of acting in such manner.

Here's a question you need to answer. When Adam and Eve sinned, who changed? Was it God that changed or was it humankind that changed?

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the **Father** of the heavenly lights, **who does not change** like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. – James 1:16-18

When humankind sinned it wasn't God that changed, it was Adam and Eve who changed and they passed that change along to all their descendants. Each and every one of us has been infected with the disease of self thanks to their mistake. And the first mistake wasn't in eating the fruit, their original sin was choosing to not trust God and instead to trust in the snake. By choosing to listen to the snake they chose to believe they knew more than God. This lack of trust changed their characters from selflessness to self-centered, selfishness. It was “all about me.”

When God came looking for Adam he called for him. Adam responded that he ran and hid because he was naked and afraid. God then asked him, “Who told you you were naked?” (Genesis 3) There isn't any hint of anger in this encounter. God simply asked the question, “Who told you that you were naked?” then he asked if they had eaten of

the tree. Adam's response was to blame it on Eve, the woman he had been willing to risk it all for only moments earlier. Eve's response was to blame God. They had both lost their selflessness and were now casting blame in an attempt to make themselves not look so bad. They had become self-aware.

God, who is enthroned from of old,
who does not change—
he will hear them and humble them,
because they have no fear of God. – Psalm 55:19

God didn't change and he doesn't change. He is the same today as he was before sin existed. And sin existed before Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit. It was the covering cherub, the one who stood in God's very presence who was the first to sin and he drug a multitude of created beings down with him. God has only acted in ways to try to rescue his creation. And I'm going to show you how the teaching of an eternally burning hell is one of those evil characteristics that Satan has almost successfully convinced the world that God is evil enough and planning eagerly to pull off.

According to the Bible we don't have a clue what things that aren't from this planet are like. We don't have the ability to imagine what is out there.

But as the Scriptures say, “No one has ever seen, no one has ever heard, no one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” – 1 Corinthians 2:9 ERV

For someone who has an active imagination this is something I find frustrating. I want to mentally conjure up what heaven is like but I don't have the ability to do that. I can imagine some odd and unreal things but to come up with what heaven holds is something that is beyond my grasp. I'm anxious to experience it for myself. Somehow just seeing it isn't enough. I want to experience it.

We were created with a need for a relationship with the Father that we cannot have in our sinful condition. It's a longing for something unknown. The Germans have a word for this and it is “zangzuit.” (Please pardon the butchered spelling.) That longing will only be fulfilled when we can be with God without any barriers between us, when we become able to experience the fullness of his love without it harming us. When you come to realize what this longing is and how it will be fulfilled, the things of not only this earth but heaven also will become meaningless. Just being with our Creator will be far more than an adequate reward for choosing to follow him rather than to follow ourselves.

As for us not knowing the wonders that await us, look at what the Hubble telescope has

done for us. We have the ability to look deeper into space than the ancient astronomers did. We see strange yet beautiful sights in outer space, things that the ancients couldn't have imagined. And yet, we haven't even begun to discover all the strange and new things that are waiting for us.

A while back I watched a video on Youtube that told about some of the things that are out there in space that Hubble has discovered. I remember two things but the rest of the video has disappeared from my memory. These two things are something that I wouldn't have dreamed up. There are 2 planets that they have been able to somehow study and tell us what they are like. One of those planets is only water. It has no land. I don't remember what the core of the planet is, whether it be just water or was there a small amount of dirt. The other planet was a place completely covered with snow. There isn't a place that doesn't have snow yet the temperatures are hot. It's a place where hot and cold cohabitate without messing each other up. I suppose that you could go snow skiing there without wearing a coat or even worrying about getting cold.

The Bible gives us evidence of an oddity that we have not seen or experienced here on this planet and that is a non-combustible fire. A fire that burns but doesn't destroy.

Let's explore this concept of a non-combusting fire and start with the story of Aaron's sons. They went into the sanctuary and did the wrong thing. Because of that fire came out from the Lord and consumed them.

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:

“Among those who approach me
I will be proved holy;
in the sight of all the people
I will be honored.””

Aaron remained silent. – Leviticus 10:1-3

This is something that used to bother me. I couldn't understand how it was that Nadab and Abihu were burned by fire yet their cousins were able to drag them out of the temple by their clothing. When you set fire to someone, their clothes will also burn. They will be destroyed. So how was it that Moses's sons were able to drag their cousins out of the temple by their clothes after they had been burned alive? (That text will be shown here in just a moment.)

When I asked a church leader for an explanation I was told that I just needed to accept

that there are people who are smarter than me who have studied this and come up with answers. All I have to do is accept it and believe it.

Believe what? He didn't give me an answer instead he told me to be quiet and stop thinking. But to tell someone to stop thinking is anti-Biblical.

A lady I know once threw a fit when I started telling her things that she had never heard before and the church hadn't taught her. She wanted to know where I was getting this information from. I told her it's in the Bible but you need to stop and think about what the book actually says instead of just believing what you've been told it says. She actually asked me, "Who told you to start thinking?" and "You need to stop thinking so much and just believe what is right."

But much of the stuff we're being told is right is in reality wrong. We need to know that it's OK to do our own thinking and then start using our brains for that very purpose. Read what the Bible is actually saying and you'll find answers to questions you didn't realize you had or answers to the questions that don't make any sense. One of those questions for me and many other people is how a God who is so filled with Love can act in a way so contrary to his character and be anxiously awaiting the day he can destroy us while keeping us alive to torture for all eternity.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. – Isaiah 1:18 KJV

This version more clearly states the above:

"I, the Lord, am the one speaking to you. Come, let's discuss this. Even if your sins are as dark as red dye, that stain can be removed and you will be as pure as wool that is as white as snow. – Isaiah 1:18 Easy Read Version

The Lord himself invites us to ask questions. For humans to tell us to stop thinking and just accept what we've been taught is heresy. It is anti-God. We were created with brains and God expects us to use them. He wants us to ask the questions then with the help of the Holy Spirit, search until we find answers. And we need to find answers that will show God to be acting in ways that are filled with love, not filled with our understanding of wrath. If we keep our hearts open to the leading of the Holy Spirit we will find those answers. We don't have to settle for someone else's opinion. And that includes the information that I'm giving you here. Read this prayerfully and ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit. Do your own research and find ways that will satisfy you that God is acting in love rather than anger and seeking retribution.

So, how do we reconcile burning someone to a crisp and their clothing remains unburned? Let's start by doing some more reading.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.

And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.

So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.

And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled. – Leviticus 10:1-6 KJV

Let's get an easier version:

Then Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu made a mistake. They took their incense dishes and put some fire and incense in them. But they did not use the fire that was on the altar—they took fire from some other place and brought it to the Lord. This was not what he had commanded.

So fire came from the Lord and destroyed Nadab and Abihu, and they died there in front of the Lord.

Then Moses said to Aaron, “The Lord says, ‘The priests who come near me must respect me. I must be holy to them and to all the people.’” So Aaron did not say anything about his sons dying.

Aaron's uncle Uzziel had two sons. They were Mishael and Elzaphan. Moses said to these sons, “Come here and get your cousins' bodies and carry them away from

this holy place and take them outside the camp.”

So Mishael and Elzaphan obeyed Moses. They carried the bodies of Nadab and Abihu outside the camp. Nadab and Abihu were still wearing their special woven shirts.

Then Moses spoke to Aaron and his other sons Eleazar and Ithamar. He said, “Don’t show any sadness! Don’t tear your clothes or mess up your hair! If you do anything to show your sadness, you will be killed, and the Lord will show his anger against everyone. But let all the other people of Israel, your relatives, cry for those the Lord destroyed with fire. But you must not even leave the entrance of the Meeting Tent. If you leave, you will die because the Lord’s anointing oil is on you.” So Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar obeyed Moses. Leviticus 10:1-7 Easy Read Version

Aaron and his remaining sons were told they would be killed if they were to go through the formal ritual of grieving for the loss of their family. But notice that it doesn't say that God would kill them. It says they would be killed. It does say that God destroyed with fire. So what gives?

We need an understanding of the fire that comes out from God. By this story we see that it is a non-combustible fire because the clothing didn't burn yet Nadab and Abihu died. Maybe a little sleuthing into the word fire would be appropriate. For that, let's use one of the texts that you provided and that is Isaiah 33:14. But we have a problem here. If we lift verse 14 out of the passage it presents a message that it isn't intended to teach. We need to read more than the one verse. Verse 14 asks the question who can dwell in the everlasting burning. But if we continue to read we find that there are people who can dwell in this fire. If we read the context we find that we actually WANT TO BE IN that fire, not out. We don't need to fear it. Let's read it in context.

“Now will I arise,” says the Lord.

“Now will I be exalted;
now will I be lifted up.

11 You conceive chaff,
you give birth to straw;
your breath is a fire that consumes you.

12 The peoples will be burned to ashes;
like cut thornbushes they will be set ablaze.”

13 You who are far away, hear what I have done;
you who are near, acknowledge my power!

14 The sinners in Zion are terrified;
trembling grips the godless:

“Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?
Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?”

15 Those who walk righteously
and speak what is right,
who reject gain from extortion
and keep their hands from accepting bribes,
who stop their ears against plots of murder
and shut their eyes against contemplating evil—

16 they are the ones who will dwell on the heights,
whose refuge will be the mountain fortress.

Their bread will be supplied,
and water will not fail them.

17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty
and view a land that stretches afar.

18 In your thoughts you will ponder the former terror:
“Where is that chief officer?

Where is the one who took the revenue?

Where is the officer in charge of the towers?”

19 You will see those arrogant people no more,
people whose speech is obscure,
whose language is strange and incomprehensible.

20 Look on Zion, the city of our festivals;
your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved;
its stakes will never be pulled up,
nor any of its ropes broken.

21 There the Lord will be our Mighty One.

It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams.

No galley with oars will ride them,
no mighty ship will sail them.

22 For the Lord is our judge,
the Lord is our lawgiver,

the Lord is our king;

it is he who will save us.

23 Your rigging hangs loose:

The mast is not held secure,

the sail is not spread.

Then an abundance of spoils will be divided
and even the lame will carry off plunder.

24 No one living in Zion will say, “I am ill”;

and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven. – Isaiah 33:10-24 NIV

The 14th verse asks the question who will be able to stand in the eternally burning fire. But if you read the verses above you'll see that those who are fearful are those who are wicked. And the wicked have a need to fear because this fire from God will destroy them. But if we keep reading we see that the very next verse answers the question of who it is that can stay in that fire.

15 Those who walk righteously
and speak what is right,
who reject gain from extortion
and keep their hands from accepting bribes,
who stop their ears against plots of murder
and shut their eyes against contemplating evil—
16 they are the ones who will dwell on the heights,
whose refuge will be the mountain fortress.

Keep reading in this passage. You'll find that it is a beautiful promise for those who love and “fear” the Lord and by “fear” I don't mean to be afraid, I mean revere. This passage goes on to tell that those who love God will not only dwell in that eternally burning fire, they will see God, the evil people who tormented them will no longer be there, it describes a place of beauty, a place where there is no sickness, and a place where our sins are forgiven.

According to this passage, we want to be in that fire, not fear it. If we choose to not follow God then the fire will destroy us. If we choose to follow God then the fire will engulf us and grant us such an abundance of goodness.

Now take a look at verse 11:

“Your breath is a fire that consumes you.”

Now compare that to Ezekiel 28:18:

By your many sins and dishonest trade
you have desecrated your sanctuaries.
So I made a fire come out from you,
and it consumed you,
and I reduced you to ashes on the ground
in the sight of all who were watching.

Ezekiel 28 is a prophecy spoken against the King of Tyre. When you read the entire passage you'll find that it has a dual application. It also speaks to Lucifer who acted to discredit God and bring down a multitude of beings dooming them to destruction.

Notice that both those passages state that fire came out from the sinner. This fire has got to be when God simply reveals to people what they have chosen to do with themselves and what they have become. This knowledge is enough to destroy them without burning them up with flames of combustion. When they are forced to see themselves for who/what they truly are they probably have a massive emotional meltdown that leads to a heart attack or major stroke or something like that and they end up dying of natural causes, not by God killing them or burning them alive forever and all eternity.

Be aware that the Bible states that it is sin that kills, not God. God is the giver of life. He is working non-stop trying to rescue us from the pathway of destruction that we are following.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23 NIV

The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death. – Proverbs 10:16

Let's move on and see if we can find more evidence to support the above and repudiate the teaching of an eternally burning hell.

Another place you'll find fire mentioned is when Moses was confronted by God up on the mountain. Moses saw a bush that was on fire but wasn't being consumed. When he approached the bush to see this oddity, God spoke to him and told him to remove his shoes for the ground he was standing on was holy. That story can be found in Exodus 3. But look at what is written in Deuteronomy. In chapter 33, verses 13-17, Moses is pronouncing a blessing upon the tribe of Joseph. You can look it up to read the entire blessing, but I'm going to place here a snippet:

About Joseph he said:

“May the Lord bless his land
with the precious dew from heaven above
and with the deep waters that lie below;

with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness
and the favor of him who dwelt in the burning bush.

That is verse 13 and the first part of verse 16. In this passage we have Moses stating that God dwelt in fire. Again, should we fear the fire? Should we be afraid? If we have chosen to follow a path other than a life with God, then we will fear the fire. If we have chosen to cast our lot with God then we will want to be in the fire because God is in the

fire.

Moving on, let's look at Judges, chapter 13. This is the story of the birth of Samson. Manoah's wife was visited by the angel of the Lord and told she would have a child. Her husband wanted to speak with this messenger. When he, the messenger, returned, Manoah's wife went and got her husband. who went back with her and spoke with this angel. When the angel left he ascended in the flame. Manoah called this angel God.

19 Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the Lord. And the Lord did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: **20** As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. **21** When the angel of the Lord did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the Lord.

22 “We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. “We have seen God!” – Judges 13:19-22

An interesting place to find a fire is in Babylon. The 3 Hebrew captives were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow down and worship an image of Nebuchadnezzar. This story is found in the 3rd chapter of Daniel. You can read it for the context and to refresh yourself on the story. Here's a portion that we want to focus on:

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual **20** and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. **21** So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. **22** The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, **23** and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, **27** and the satraps,

prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. **29** Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.” – Daniel 13:19-28 NIV

The fire that the Hebrews were thrown into was a man-made fire that destroyed. We can see that because the guards who took them and threw them into the fire were burned so badly they died. They (the 3 Hebrews) were firmly tied when they were thrown into the fire, yet Nebuchadnezzar stated they were walking around, unbound and unharmed, and there were four men, not three. He also said that fourth man looks like a son of the gods.

When they came out of the fire, they were no longer tied, and the fire that was so hot it had killed those who tossed them into it didn't do any harm to them. Their hair wasn't singed, their clothes weren't scorched and they didn't even smell like fire. They had been protected by the One who dwells in the non-combusting fire. Nebuchadnezzar saw him and recognized him to be of Divine origin.

Now let's move forward to the book of Revelation. John saw a vision of Jesus and I've placed here his description.

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. **14** The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. **15** His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. **16** In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. – Revelation 1:12-16

Notice that fire is mentioned in this description. His eyes were like a blazing fire and his feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace. What a sight this must have been for John to see! I try to imagine someone who looks like this and it's amazing. I don't really have a word to describe what I feel when I try to imagine this. I wish I could have seen this myself. It would have been fascinating.

Hopefully I've given you enough evidence to support the belief in a fire that we are

unfamiliar with. A fire that burns but doesn't destroy. When we understand about this fire, we can then go to the texts about an eternally burning fire and find what they are talking about. I've already mentioned the first one on your list. The line mentioned was taken out of context. When you read the entire passage you get a different picture of the fire and find that we want to be in that fire, not out.

Here's what you sent for the next text:

Matt 13:50 and throw them into the **fiery furnace**, in that place will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This in itself isn't enough information to go on. We need to read it in context to understand what is happening. This is a parable that Jesus told to his disciples.

47 “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. **48** When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. **49** This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous **50** and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Matthew 13:47-50

Notice that the kingdom of heaven is catching both good and bad fish. Likewise, the message of God is catching both the good and the evil. The good are those who choose to follow the true God and the evil would be those who follow a god who wants to destroy. The true God is the Lifegiver who is in the business of trying to rescue us. The impostor is the one who wants us to believe that god has evil characteristics. Thousands upon thousands of people worship a god whom they believe will destroy their enemies. But they don't stop to realize that they themselves are someone's enemy and this god they worship will likely destroy them too. These people will commit all kinds of atrocious acts and believe they are doing it for God.

Now here's a concept for you. All the people will be thrown into the blazing furnace. But remember, that furnace is God's presence. The true followers of Jesus will thrive in that fire while the wicked will be destroyed. But remember that it isn't God that kills, it's sin that kills.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23 NIV

The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death. – Proverbs 10:16

God doesn't have to kill sinners. Right now he is protecting us from the results of our own follies. When he removes his protection then it is the sin in us that will kill us, not God.

Let me stop for a moment and explain what sin is and for the sake of space I'll make this short. This is supposed to be about eternally burning hellfire, not sin. God is the lifegiver and sustainer of life. Without him we cannot survive. Sin is living our lives without God. Sins are the result of living our lives without God. Sins would be the sinful acts that we commit. But sin is choosing to live without God.

God works non-stop trying to reach us and let us know that he loves us and we don't need to fear him. He wants us to know that we've been duped. And the teaching that he is planning to torture us by burning us forever is a concept that cannot be true because it isn't something that Love would be capable of doing.

There are texts to support the concept of sin being separated from God and sins or sinful acts the results of this separation, but I'm not going to take the time to look any of them up. That is a different study altogether. If the concept interests you you need to study into it and not just take my word for it. Don't believe anything you've been told without studying it out for yourself and coming to your own conclusion. Your very life is dependent on that. And for many people they will find themselves struggling in making a decision to follow the god who wants to kill and destroy or follow the God who heals and forgives.

Before moving on to the next text that you sent, there was something in this chapter that caught my eye and should be mentioned. That is the parable of the weeds. You can read the parable in verses 24-29. Notice that the harvesters are asking what to do with the weeds. The Master tells them to allow the weeds to grow up with the good seed then at harvest time they will be separated and the weeds will be tied into bundles to be burned.

Later in that chapter he gives an explanation of this parable. It gives some explanation about burning the weeds. Here's what it says:

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. **42** They will throw them

into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43**
Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear. – Matthew 13: 26-43 NIV

Jesus tells his disciples that the weeds are the people of the evil one so they would be those who chose to follow the one who is a deceiver. At the end of this earth as we know it, the angels will weed out all the wicked and throw them into the furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Sounds like they will be tossed into hell, doesn't it. We're going to get to that. It's one of the texts you've sent so hang on for just a few more minutes.

I can remember seeing someone get so upset he gnashed his teeth. He was experiencing extreme emotions brought on by the realization that he had done something that hurt someone but he was reluctant to accept that he was the cause of their injury. He was in turmoil over having to face the fact that he was not so wonderful after all. In the face of this self-revelation, he still demanded to have his way despite the harm he was doing to the other person. In the end, he rejected his conscience and continued to treat others as though they were there for his own personal amusement and could be tossed aside when he tired of them. I happened to be there when this realization came to him and I watched him struggle with the turmoil of recognizing that he was wrong yet determined to ignore the feelings and needs of the party he was harming. As I watched him struggle with the reality of what he was doing he literally gnashed his teeth.

When I read texts like this, I remember this acquaintance and think how people will react when they are finally brought face-to-face with what they've made of themselves and how they have harmed others. Sadly, this horrid experience for them won't be enough to change their characters and in the end they will be tossed into the lake of fire. But what is the lake of fire? The Bible tells us and I'll let you in on that one when we reach the text you sent that covers it.

When you read texts like this that state people will be thrown into a fire, blazing furnace, lake of fire, eternally burning flames, etc... just remember that the fire they will be thrown into is God's presence, not a literal combusting fire. God won't kill them, he doesn't have to. He will simply remove his protection and allow them to come to the realization of what they have made of themselves and done to others and they will experience this gnashing of teeth. God's fire destroys sin, not the sinner. The sinner dies when they refuse to let go of their sin which is living their life apart from the one who is the Lifegiver. A flower that is plucked from it's stem cannot continue to live. It needs the sustaining roots to feed and nurture it.

Here's the next passage you sent me:

Matt 25:46 These shall go off to everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.

This text comes from the parable of the sheep and the goats. Take a look at the verses above the one you mentioned and you'll find another reference to eternal fire.

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

Here Jesus again mentions an eternal fire and he said it was prepared for the devil and his angels. Some people have used this passage to claim that nobody will go to hell because hell was created for Satan and his angels, not for humans. But how can they claim that? Jesus is telling the wicked to go into the fires that have been prepared for Satan.

Remember that God is Love. And as Love he still loves Satan even though Satan has acted in an attempt to destroy God's entire creation. He even acted to try to destroy God by having Jesus violently murdered. Jesus states that this fire where people will be thrown has been prepared for Satan and his angels so humans and demons will be sent to the same place. But what is that fire?

As for everlasting punishment, how long is forever? Does forever ever end? No. The punishment of the wicked will never end and the reward for the righteous will never end. And the choice of which reward we receive is completely ours to make. Will we choose never-ending life or never-ending punishment? The punishment mentioned in verse 46 is defined in verse 41 as the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil. On the surface it sounds like God will burn people forever and ever without end but this action does not agree with the conditions of acting in a loving manner. Burning someone alive for any amount of time is torture therefore it isn't an act of love so it isn't a correct teaching. We need to keep searching. Once again, God dwells in the fire and that's where we want to be.

Dwelling in the fire would be torture for someone who is so evil they cannot even look upon God because to do so would kill them. Would someone who is self-aware and self-oriented be happy being forced to live in a way devoid of self and having to do things only for the good of others? No. To them that would be torture.

Continuing to your next text:

Mark 9:47-48 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**-- 48where 'Their worm does not die and the **fire is not quenched.**'

I seem to be making a case that God dwells in fire. God is eternal. He always has been and always will be. God is completely holy. He is Love with a body and that is something we can't understand. He only operates in ways that are loving and compassionate. Placing a sinner into God's presence would be torture. God knows that and for him to force someone to be in a place of torture is outside his nature. It isn't an act of love. We cannot force someone to love us.

Let's do some math here. If God dwells in the fire and his fire is an ever-burning fire that consumes sin, not people, then hell-fire would for the wicked be to experience God's presence. That's not what you were expecting to read, was it? I just turned being in the presence of God into sheer hell for the wicked. But I won't end it there. There is another text that will shed light on this. It's coming.

The next passage you sent was:

Isaiah 66:24 “And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me.
For their worm does not die, and their **fire is not quenched**. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

I hope you noticed that this passage is talking about dead people. These people are dead. Let me share a passage about dead people:

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. – Ecclesiastes 9:5 NIV

According to this text those who are dead don't know anything and they have no further reward. Even their name will be forgotten. However, the person who wrote this missed something and that is God's love for those who are gone. He will never forget them and will always be grieving over the children he lost.

For those who are dwelling in the fire, to go throughout eternity remembering the people they loved who chose death instead of heaven would be misery. For them to be happy they will come to an understanding that God did all he could to try to rescue the wicked. When they accept that death was what the people chose then the redeemed will be able to continue their lives without thinking back on the evils they encountered while living on this earth.

I have to wonder why you chose this particular text. Are you thinking that those who are saved will be leaving heaven to go out and watch the wicked who are burning and find that to be loathsome? Well, if it's loathsome, why are they going out to watch it? But we really don't need to worry about the wicked because they are dead and Ecclesiastes says they don't know anything.

Here's your next text and I took it just a bit out of order:

Mark 9:47-48 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**-- 48where 'Their worm does not die and the **fire is not quenched.**'

Again we have hell fire and fire that is not quenched. Let me refer you back to the first text you listed.

Isaiah 33:14 Sinners of Zion are afraid, trembling has seized the godless: "Who among us can **live with the consuming fire?**" "Who among us can live with **everlasting burnings?**"

This passage also mentions everlasting burning and consuming fire. But these two fires cancel each other out. One is a consuming fire. A consuming fire burns things up. The other is an everlasting burning. It doesn't burn things up.

I think it's time to let you know what the Bible says hell fire/everlasting fire/lake of fire/etc... is. It does give a definition and we'll discuss that with the next text you gave and it is in Revelation.

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the **lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be **tormented day and night forever and ever.**

This passage is a major key to defining the lake of fire. But this one text alone presents a picture of a god who is a killer. Killing is not an act of love so there is a problem with it. We need to read more about this to find out what is going on. I've used the NIV because it's what I'm the most familiar with. You can use whatever version you choose.

The Judgment of Satan

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison **8** and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. **9** They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp

of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. **10** And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The Judgment of the Dead

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. **15** Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

We need to recognize that Revelation is a book of symbolism and most of it should not be interpreted literally. We don't know everything the book is telling us but God will give us the information we need when the need for it arises. I've heard that it was written in all this symbolism depicting dragons and other oddities because had John written it where it could be clearly understood the church would have destroyed it. I can't vouch for that because I wasn't there to ask him, but there may be some validity to that theory.

This passage is identified as the judgment of Satan. It occurs after what is called the millennium. God's people must be on this earth at the time this occurs because Satan has marshaled his forces and they are planning to attack the city. Take a look at what this text identifies the city to be. It indicates that God's people are the city. If you will look elsewhere in Revelation there is a description of the city given. It is described as being 1400 miles cubed. Cubed. Cities aren't cubed. This would be another hint that the city is something other than a place with walls, streets, buildings, etc....

So Satan and his forces are planning to attack God's people. But this battle never takes place. Before they can attack fire comes down from heaven and devours them. We learned earlier that God dwells in the fire and fire consumes sin, not sinners. It is the sin that consumes sinners. When this fire from God envelopes those who are planning to attack, they are suddenly brought face-to-face with the reality of who they are and what they have chosen for their lives. They realize the harm that has been done to others because of their own actions. This realization causes the gnashing of teeth we talked about earlier. In the end they die and it's probably that they are taken out by a heart attack or stroke or something like that. God doesn't need to kill them. Their separation from the Lifegiver is now complete and will never be reestablished. Without a connection to their Life Source they will never come back to life. Their death is eternal.

Satan is also thrown into this lake of fire with his followers. He must also go through the process of losing his connection with the One who is sustaining his life. When that happens he will have a massive amount of damage he will have to admit to himself that he was responsible for. When this fire from God engulfs him, he will also be eternally separated from his Life Source and he will be eternally gone. This text states that after they have been thrown into the lake of fire, they are tormented day and night for ever and ever. That would mean their torment never ends. What torments them? It would be the realization that they have chosen to make themselves unfit to live within the boundaries that God set when he created. But notice that they were devoured. They died. Their torment lasted until they no longer had any life in them and they died having no hope for a resurrection. Their death, their torment is eternal. And when you contemplate that death is eternal, remember the text in Ecclesiastes that states the dead don't know anything. Their thoughts have perished.

But we're not done yet. There is to be a judgment and according to Revelation this judgment happens after the wicked are tossed into the lake of fire. Keep reading in this chapter. Revelation reveals that those who are being judged are dead. They are already gone. They are no longer among the living and according to Ecclesiastes they don't know this is happening. The dead don't know anything.

After this judgment of the dead, notice what Revelation says will happen. Death and hades or hell will be thrown into the lake of fire. Hell will be thrown into hell. Now how will that happen? If we keep reading we'll find out.

“Then earth and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

So, the lake of fire that people fear isn't a literal vat of flames that scorch people. It is nothing more than God obliterating death. Death will no longer exist. From that point forward all of God's remaining creation can live peacefully without wondering how much longer they have to live. They will live eternally forward. They won't live eternally backwards because they had a beginning. Only God had no beginning.

Let's not stop here. Let's go on into the next chapter in Revelation and find what it has to say. Here are a couple passages that we can't ignore:

3 I heard a loud voice from the throne. It said, “Now God’s home is with people. He will live with them. They will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone.” –

Revelation 21:3,4 ERV

God is going to wipe away every tear from the eyes of his people. There will be no more death, sadness, crying or pain. Those who are found worthy to be with God are those who have learned to live the 11th commandment which is to love one another. God wants us to have a character like his and his character is love. Love is what he does and it's what he wants us to do. Those who have developed this perfect character will be filled with compassion for others and for them to be watching people they once knew and loved being tortured by being burned alive would not be a happy experience. They would be sad and crying. No, we must believe that putting an end to suffering is the humane and only loving thing that God can do.

6 The one on the throne said to me, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give free water from the spring of the water of life to anyone who is thirsty. **7** All those who win the victory will receive all this. And I will be their God, and they will be my children. **8** But those who are cowards, those who refuse to believe, those who do terrible things, those who kill, those who sin sexually, those who do evil magic, those who worship idols, and those who tell lies—they will all have a place in the lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” ERV

God himself is speaking in the above passage. He states very clearly that the lake of burning sulfur is the second death. When you have experienced this second death, you are eternally gone.

The next text is Luke 16:19-31, the rich man and Lazarus.

This is not a real story, it is a parable. I've heard it said that this story was familiar to the Israelites. Jesus may have changed the name of the beggar because he later resurrected a man named Lazarus. When that happened the rulers didn't believe, they only plotted to kill Lazarus along with Jesus. Did they succeed? I don't know. I don't remember reading that in the Bible.

Next we have:

Job 12:14-15 If He tears down, it cannot be rebuilt; one He imprisons cannot be released. 15If He holds back the waters, they dry up; if He releases them, they destroy the earth.

We need to back up a couple verses here and read more of the passage.

“To God belong wisdom and power;

- counsel and understanding are his.
- 14** What he tears down cannot be rebuilt;
those he imprisons cannot be released.
- 15** If he holds back the waters, there is drought;
if he lets them loose, they devastate the land.
- 16** To him belong strength and insight;
both deceived and deceiver are his.

Job rightly stated that God has wisdom and power. But what he missed is that God is Love. There are times when we have to do unpleasant things in order to discipline our children. And please understand that discipline and punishment are not the same thing. Punishment is when you are seeking to retaliate. They did it to me so I'll do it to them. Discipline is taking corrective action in an attempt to teach someone right from wrong. God is also in the position of parenting. In fact, he is the perfect parent. But even perfect parents fail because sometimes their children choose the wrong path. As a perfect parent, God didn't make any mistakes. However, he granted his children the right to choose for themselves. A vast amount of his children have chosen to follow the path that leads to their destruction and many take others with them. God will discipline when he needs to in an attempt to stop someone who is about to crash.

We cannot judge God over this. We don't know the ins and outs the way that he does. But we do know that when God disciplines he does it in love. There is no malice involved. His intentions are only meant to show someone the right way to go and he will give them as much love and guidance as they will accept.

Do you notice that Job is accusing God of holding back the waters then letting them loose to devastate the land? Do you not wonder if he may have been feeling bitter over the loss of his children, health, wealth and status? Perhaps he wasn't aware that Satan is able to control the weather and was blaming God for the storm that killed his family. Yet despite the accusation, he didn't charge God with doing something wrong. He trusted God and this was considered to be not sinful.

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, **19** when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship **21** and said:
“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
and naked I will depart.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
may the name of the Lord be praised.”

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. – Job 1:18-22
NIV

Your next text was Job 20.

This chapter is something that Zophar stated and God was upset with Zophar because he spoke things that were untrue. We can disregard anything any of Job's “friends” had to say for God stated that they all spoke incorrectly.

7 After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am angry with you and your two friends, because **you have not spoken the truth about me**, as my servant Job has. **8** So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. **You have not spoken the truth about me**, as my servant Job has.” **9** So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer. – Job 42:7-9 NIV

That is the end of the list of texts that you sent. I'm adding one I ran across while going through the above texts and thought it would be of interest to you.

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. **14** We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. **15** As has just been said:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion.”

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? **17** And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? **18** And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? **19** So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. – Hebrews 3:12-19 NIV

This passage warns us about unbelief. God will give us what we insist on having and if we insist on not believing in him then he will withdraw from us and let us be without him. Separating ourselves from the Life source is not a smart thing to do if you are interested in continuing your life.

That's the end of the passages you sent. My thanks to you for sending them. I've been under a load of stress for the past few weeks and working with these texts has been a welcome and needed break from what is currently an upset routine. This diversion was fun and interesting to study through.

May God bless you and your hunny,

Hannah

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