

The Reality of Hell

By David Lasseter

Is hell a real place, or simply a figment of someone's vivid imagination designed to frighten men into following a pattern of religious practice? The answer to this question is of paramount importance. If hell is not a real place, then we have very little to fear after death. However, if hell is a real place of eternal punishment then those who qualify for an eternity in hell have much to fear and would be wise to determine how they might avoid such a fate and do all they can to avoid it. In this study I will address the question of hell and its reality.

In the religious world today there is much disagreement about hell. In any situation where one must determine what is truth among many different contradicting statements one must begin by establishing authority. Once one knows what source is authoritative one may look to that source to accurately identify the truth, and will oftentimes find it buried in a sea of lies. As in all of my studies I will begin by establishing authority, after which I will address the question of the reality of hell.

From our prior studies we know the Bible is authoritative. It shows evident authority in its scientific revelations and fulfilled prophecies. Please review "Why we must use the Bible only" for further details regarding the authoritative nature of the word of God. Since we know the Bible is authoritative, the answer to our question regarding hell lies within its pages. However, what are its teachings regarding hell?

Pasted below are statements I found on various websites, indicating the belief of the author that hell is nothing more than a myth. Please consider these statements:

1. Ed Viswanathan has a web page entitled, "About HELL MYTHOLOGY!!!!!!". The URL is <http://www.indolink.com/Forum/Arts-Culture/messages/630.html>. Here are a few sentences from his essay: "Few months back, I had a strange letter in my e-mail informing me that I WILL GO TO HELL AND I WILL ALSO BE TAKING A LOT OF PEOPLE WITH ME THERE. Then only I realized that I never ever wrote about AMAZING MYTHS OF HELL. So, let us study a brief history of hell. It is extremely interesting. I do not know how many Christians know the fact that Christian HELL is a DIRECT descendent of the "Hell mythology" of Hindus, Egyptians, Greeks, Persians and Romans. Believe it or not, like so many things, HELL IS OF PAGAN ORIGIN. Studying world history in-depth, I can only laugh, when some one tells me that I WILL GO TO HELL. The question I wanted to always ask," Which Hell? Hindu hell, Homer's Hell, Plato's hell, Dante's hell, Jewish hell, Islamic hell or Christian hell??? Why should I go to a Christian hell, when I have so many other beautiful hells to choose from?????????????"

2. An author (name unknown) for a website entitled "bible411.com", URL <http://www.bible411.com/currentevents/ce990807.htm>, writes: "At the conclusion of this investigation of the Bible use of the word hell, thank God, we find no such place of everlasting torture in the Bible! Regardless of what man may say either way—as is found in the creeds or announced from the pulpits—we have found the Bible "hell," sheol, hades is the grave. The penalty upon all our race condemned on account of Adam's sin is death, not eternal torment. Hell is the tomb: the death condition. And we find another hell (gehenna the Second Death: utter destruction) is the final penalty upon those few who, after being redeemed and brought to the full knowledge of the truth and to full ability to obey it, shall yet choose death by insisting on a course of opposition to God and righteousness. How just. How reasonable. How loving our God.
3. A website entitled "religioustolerance.org", URL http://www.religioustolerance.org/heav_hel.htm#lib states the following: Liberal Christians recognize that the writers of the Bible held a variety of beliefs concerning Heaven and Hell. The earliest books of the Bible described Sheol: an underground cavern where all people, good and bad, spent eternity after death, leading a thirsty, shadowy existence isolated from God. Borrowing some ideas from the Zoroastrian religion, some later Jewish writers saw the faithful being resurrected and leading long lives in a purified earth before dying a second time. After the Greek invasion, the Jews picked up the Hellenistic concept that some individuals will go to Heaven for eternal reward, while the rest go to Hell for eternal punishment. The book of Daniel, from the 2nd century BCE, and the Christian Scriptures from the 1st and 2nd century CE describe this Hell. It is pictured as either a place of annihilation, where people simply cease to exist, or of eternal punishment. Generally speaking, religious liberals:
 - ◆ Reject the reality of Sheol.
 - ◆ Reject the reality of Hell as either a place of annihilation or eternal punishment.
 - ◆ Most look upon Hell as a concept, not as a place of punishment.
 - ◆ They view the various concepts of Hell in the Bible as myths. Although the writers of the Bible sincerely believed in Sheol and Hell, it has no real existence.
 - ◆ The concept of an eternal punishment for a single oversight, error, or sin during life is unjust.
 - ◆ Punishment of an individual because she/he had

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never heard the Gospel is irrational and unjust.

- ◆ Punishment of a person because they hold different religious beliefs is unjust. Believing that God is capable of behaving in this way is blasphemy.
- ◆ They feel that a loving God would be incapable of creating a Hell. Even if He did, the concept of an infinite sentence is incompatible with elementary justice. They would view such a deity as profoundly immoral, uncaring and intolerant.

These three sites are a mere sampling of the various opinions regarding hell available on the internet. As I was reviewing these sites it became clear to me that one of two different beliefs was evident in those sites which taught that hell is mere myth:

1. A loving God could never send one of His creation to a place of eternal torment.
2. In the original language the words translated "hell" in the English translations of the Bible do not reflect a place of eternal torment.

I would like to address these issues as we continue in our study of hell.

Could a loving God send a man to hell for an eternity of torment?

If you've completed my study entitled, "Is one church as good as another" you'll recall how I began that study by looking at three of God's characteristics. We considered how God doesn't change, how He is no respecter of persons, and how He demands men to worship Him in spirit and in truth. These three characteristics of God are part of His nature and are always in force. God hasn't changed and He never will change. God has never been a respecter of persons and He never will be. And God has always demanded men to worship Him in the manner He authorized, and He always will. In our study of the church we considered the different ways God has instructed man to worship Him throughout history, but He has always demanded man's obedience to His commandments in effect at the time. As we consider hell I'd like to look at a few more of God's characteristics.

1. **God cannot lie.** We read in Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;". The Greek word translated "cannot lie" in this verse is *apseudes*, and is used only once in the entire New Testament. The word originates from *pseudos* with the negative particle *a* added as a prefix. *Pseudos* refers to a lie, a conscious and intentional falsehood, or anything that is not what it seems to be (that is, something which is deceitful). Therefore, the adjective *apseudes* indicates that God is incapable of telling a lie, relating an intentional falsehood, or stating something that is not as it seems to be. God cannot be deceitful! "But I thought God could do all things!" someone will state. It is true that God is omnipotent (all powerful), but God cannot do something that is against His nature! To do so would make God untrue to Himself! So the very nature of God makes it impossible for

Him to lie.

2. **God is just.** (Romans 3:26) What does it mean when the Bible states God is just? Said of God, it designates the perfect agreement between His nature and His acts (Vine's dictionary). This is closely related to the first characteristic of God we considered earlier. When the Bible states God is "just" it is stating that God will never deviate from His promises. There is perfect agreement between His nature and His actions. As we noted above, God cannot do something against His nature. This is the righteousness of God. We can have absolute trust in the upcoming fulfillment of any promise God has made.
3. **God hates sin.** In Psalm 5:4-6 we read, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man." (NKJV) Proverbs 6:16-19 reads, "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren." (NKJV) In these two passages we see another part of God's nature: There are things He hates. Not only are there *things* He hates, He hates *all workers of iniquity!* He loathes (abhors) the bloodthirsty and deceitful man! These aren't *things*, ***these are people!*** David tells us that God hates people who work iniquity and those who are bloodthirsty and deceitful. Their fate will be to dwell apart from Him, not stand in His sight, and to be destroyed!

Just as surely as God is love, He is also a God who cannot lie, whose actions are in perfect accord with His promises, and who hates sin. The only way God would not send a man to hell for eternal punishment would be if ***He never promised to do so***, or if ***He promised never to do so***. If we find in the scriptures promises made by God to send one to hell, then we know absolutely that hell exists and that God will send men there.

Does hell exist?

Nobody alive on this earth today can say from firsthand experience that hell either does or does not exist. If hell exists, then it is a place from which one will not escape (Luke 16:26-31). If one has firsthand knowledge of the existence of hell, they will not be able to return and tell us about it. The only way one can say hell does not exist from firsthand experience is to have experienced firsthand every possible spiritual abode and not found hell among them. Obviously nobody alive on this earth today may truthfully make the claim that they have done so. Therefore, our knowledge of the existence or mythology of hell is based solely on sources other than firsthand experience. Does this render our belief in hell as something less than certain? Absolutely not! We can be certain of the existence or the

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non-existence of hell if we can be certain of the source of information! Let's return to Luke 16. Here we read of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man enjoyed his life on earth, while Lazarus laid outside his gate, full of sores and begging for what he received. Both died. After death the rich man went to torment, Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. When the hopelessness of his situation became clear the rich man asked Abraham to permit Lazarus to return to earth and warn his five brothers of this place of torment so that they might not spend eternity there with him. Notice Abraham's response, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (verse 29) The rich man replied, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." (verse 30) Abraham's response to his statement: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (verse 31) What do we learn about the source of information in this lesson: ***The scriptures are more valuable than firsthand experience to convince one of the existence of hell!!*** Here we learn the source of information to which we must turn to be certain of the existence or non-existence of hell. If the Bible teaches that there is a place of torment to which those who are disobedient will be sent for eternity, then we can be more certain of this truth than we would should one rise from the dead and tell us firsthand of hell and its torments! So the next step in our quest to determine whether hell is real or not is to search the scriptures and look for teachings warning of hell's existence.

Hebrew and Greek words translated "hell"

I include this section only because the words translated "hell" are often used as evidence "proving" hell's non-existence. If you would like an in-depth review of the thoughts of those who discount the existence of hell based on the original words please point your browser to <http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/tbell.html>. After doing so, please return to our study of hell and consider hell as a *place*, not as a *word*. The words translated "hell" in the King James version of the Old and New Testaments are:

1. *Sheol* (OT)
2. *Gehenna* (NT)
3. *Hades* (NT)
4. *Tartaroo* (NT)

Now, what did I mean by considering hell as a place rather than a word? Simply this: The author of the essay at the URL noted above attempts to prove the non-existence of hell by dissecting the 4 words translated "hell" in the KJV of the Bible. I want us to get away from the words and look in the scriptures for a *place* of eternal torment, which may not have been given a specific *name*. If hell is given a description in the scriptures, and a place of torment not called "hell" has the same description, then the characteristics of the unnamed place being the same as the named place make the unnamed place hell. For example, if you were describing Cincinnati to me but you didn't know the name of the city, you might say: "There's a city of 350,000 people located in southwestern Ohio, on the Ohio river, nicknamed

the Queen city, and is built on seven hills. I can describe it but I can't remember the name." I would say, "The city you're describing is Cincinnati." I could give him additional characteristics of the city, which would add to his understanding of the city of Cincinnati. These additional characteristics would do nothing more than enhance his knowledge about the city of Cincinnati. The name would be unchanged, but now he would be able to describe different suburbs, streets, parks, sports teams, etc., which characterize Cincinnati. The same applies to hell. If the Lord teaches us of a place of eternal torment, each characteristic of that place we read of throughout the scriptures only adds to our understanding of this place of eternal torment. So let's look to the scriptures and see if they teach of a place of eternal torment for those who are disobedient.

Scriptures describing a place named "hell"

1. Mark 9:43-48. Here Jesus tells us of a place called "hell" and tells us it is a place of fire that shall never be quenched. Not only does He tell us of this characteristic of hell, He tells us that people are destined to be cast into this place. In verse 47 He offers two eternal fates for mankind: One may enter into the kingdom of God, or one may be cast into hell fire. Jesus hints at the awfulness of hell when he tells us that it would be better for us to cut off an offending hand or foot, or pluck out an offending eye and enter heaven maimed than to go to hell with our bodies intact. Remember, God hates sin. Not only does He hate sin, but also he hates those who work iniquity. Those who are tempted to sin with their eyes, hands, or feet would be better off without them than to work iniquity with these parts of their physical bodies and enter unquenchable fire for eternity. Along with unquenchable fire those who are cast into hell will have to deal with a place where "their worm dieth not." (verses 44 and 46) So we see in Mark 9:43-48 an undeniable direct connection between a place named "hell" and eternal torment.
2. Matthew 18:7-9. This is Matthew's account of Jesus' teaching recorded in Mark 9:43-48. Matthew adds another characteristic of the fire of hell: It is everlasting. This is in many ways similar to the phrase "fire that is not quenched" used by Mark. However, many may find the word "everlasting" to be more familiar than "unquenchable." These two passages tell us that the fire of hell will never be extinguished.

Scriptures describing a place of eternal punishment

1. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Here Paul tells us that those who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will suffer everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. Here we read of another characteristic of hell: Those so condemned will forever be separated from God and His power! We read elsewhere in the scriptures how the

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evil and the unjust who are still alive on God's earth continually receive blessings from Him. In Matthew 5:45 we read, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Luke 6:35 reads, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." But those condemned to an eternity in hell will forever be separated from the power of God, which was the source of untold blessings during their lifetimes despite their evil deeds.

2. Luke 16:25. The one condemned to hell will remember for all eternity how they rejected the Son of God and the forgiveness He offered them. In Luke 16:25 we read of Abraham reminding the rich man of the blessings he experienced while alive on earth. "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Imagine an eternity of anguish and an intact memory, recalling again and again the times you rejected the Son of God. Each time you consider this fact you realize that you are in hell because you chose to be there! It didn't have to be this way!
3. Matthew 8:10-12. Jesus had just heard the words of the centurion, demonstrating his understanding of the authority Jesus possessed (verses 5-9). Jesus marvelled and said to those who followed, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus tells the Jews (the children of the kingdom) that the Gentiles (those who come from the east and west) will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven while they will be cast into outer darkness. We know this refers to eternal reward and eternal punishment because Jesus states that those from the east and west will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead, but alive in the kingdom of God (cf Matthew 22:32). The Jews will experience a different eternal fate: they will be cast into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus tells the Jews again of their fate in Luke 13:28,29. Here Jesus tells us more about hell. It is dark, one hears the weeping of those who have no hope, and one experiences an eternity of others biting them. We read in 1 John 1:5 that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." We've already seen how the one in eternal punishment is separated from God. Since God is light, and one in eternal torment is separated from God, such a one is in an eternal darkness that exceeds any they experienced on earth. The wailing they hear is that of souls who have no hope and realize they are without hope. The

Greek word *brugmos* (translated "gnashing") is used seven times in the New Testament, and each time refers to the experiences of one who is cast into eternal punishment. *Brugmos* is derived from *brucho*, a Greek word used only once in the NT. In Acts 7:54 we read of the response of those who heard Stephen's testimony: "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." *Brucho* is translated "gnashed" in this verse. Just as those who heard Stephen's testimony responded by biting him (with more than one person engaging in this act), those who are condemned to hell will experience those condemned with them biting them for all eternity.

4. Revelation 21:8. Here we learn an additional characteristic of the fire that burns forever in hell: The lake burns with fire and brimstone. Brimstone is a word we don't use much in modern English. This element is more commonly referred to as sulfur. When sulfur burns it emits a suffocating odor suggestive of rotten eggs. So, in addition to everlasting fire, one condemned to hell experiences the suffocating odor of rotten eggs for all eternity. (You can learn more about stinkdamp at <http://www.c-f-c.com/supportdocs/sulfur.htm>.)
5. Luke 16:22-24. Again we return to the rich man and Lazarus. Here we read of the rich man in hell, asking a small favor of Abraham. All he asked was that Lazarus might leave Abraham's bosom, dip the tip of his finger in water, and place it on the rich man's tongue so that it might be cooled. Unfortunately for him, it is impossible for one in Lazarus' place to leave and assist one in hell. Abraham reveals the presence of a "great gulf" which separates the place of eternal rest from that of eternal torment. Because of this gulf, the one in torment cannot pass to the place of rest, and those in rest cannot pass to the place of torment. Imagine the torture the rich man was (and is) experiencing, to make such a request of Abraham. All he wanted was for his tongue to be cooled a little. Have you ever experienced such a degree of oral discomfort, so severe that the simple act of a drop of water being placed on your tongue would provide some relief?
6. 1 John 4:7,8. Here we read, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." How does this apply to hell, you might be asking? Consider how one condemned to hell is separated from God for all eternity. If one is separated from God forever, and God is love, then one condemned to hell exists for all eternity in the complete absence of love! Think of that! How often have you heard said over the grave of one recently departed but unsaved, "Well, I know she is not in heaven, but at least she is reunited with her husband"? It makes no difference! In hell, there is no love. Her husband may be the one gnashing her with his teeth! Not only is the one in hell separated for the first time ever from the power of God and the good gifts He bestows upon the just and the unjust, such a one is completely separated for the first time ever from any type of

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love! And they have no hope of ever experiencing love again!

7. Matthew 7:13,14. Jesus admonishes those hearing His sermon on the mount to, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." What is this destruction of which Jesus speaks? Please turn to Luke 13:23,24. One asks Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Jesus answered, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here Jesus makes a direct connection between the strait gate and salvation. What does that tell us about His words in Matthew? The broad gate leads to eternal destruction! But what does Jesus say about the number of people entering eternity through each gate? Few will enter into life, and many will enter into destruction. Jesus tells us that the majority of people will spend eternity in hell! Not only does hell exist, but in truth more people will go to hell for eternity than to heaven. What do many modern day preachers teach? "God is love. He won't allow one of His creation to suffer such an unjust punishment as eternal torment in hell!" What does Jesus say? Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Notice when He spoke these words: Immediately after finishing His teaching about those who will enter into one of these two gates! Jesus warns us of those who speak words pleasant to the ear but contrary to the word of God. These false prophets will lead many through the broad gate into eternal destruction. Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3,4, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Those who follow those teachers of fables will be surprised at the Day of Judgment. Hear Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These people thought they were doing the will of God by performing these various wonderful works, but they were mistaken! How many people today are lulled into a false sense of security by the soothing words of ministers preaching fables?
8. Revelation 21:4. John writes, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Again, why did I include this verse in a study of

hell? Think of what John reveals to us. In heaven, all sorrow will have passed away. No more crying will be heard. Imagine you're at the graveside of one of your closest family members. You know they died in sin and will spend eternity in torment. How do you feel? I'm sure the sadness within you far exceeds that generated by their death. You think of your loved one suffering the torments we're studying today. But you are faithful to the Lord and enter heaven for eternity when you die. John tells us that in heaven your sorrow has passed away. What does this tell us about your memory of your loved one in hell? You have none! You can't enter heaven with the memory of your husband, wife, son, daughter, mother, or father spending eternity in everlasting fire and be free of sorrow! Those in heaven must forget this. Those condemned to hell are absolutely forgotten for all eternity by those closest to them who pass through the strait gate into heaven! Hell is the pinnacle of loneliness! In hell the condemned has nobody who cares for them. They are absolutely forgotten for all eternity by those in heaven who were closest to them on earth. Since there is no love in hell, those who were closest to them on earth who are also condemned to eternal torment will no longer have the love for them they had on earth.

Summary

Earlier in our study we determined that one of two things must be true in order for God not to send one to hell for eternity: Either He must never have promised to do so, or He must have promised never to do so. In the scriptures we clearly see that God has promised to send those who refuse to obey Him to a place of eternal torment! As we noted earlier, if we could find scriptures indicating a promise that the disobedient would spend eternity in hell, that must mean hell is a real place! Why? Because of the nature of God. He cannot lie, His actions are in perfect agreement with His nature, and He hates those who work iniquity. Any promise He makes is guaranteed to be kept! If He makes a promise that one will spend eternity in hell, then hell is ready to receive them should they die in a disobedient state. This is not in contradiction to another of His characteristics: Love. Many have been led down the path of falsely believing that hell cannot exist simply because God is love! God showed His love for us in allowing Jesus to die on the cross (Romans 5:8). However, Jesus' death granted us the *possibility* of salvation, not the *certainty*! God gave us specific instructions as to what we must do to make our calling and election sure (as Peter admonishes in 2 Peter 1:10). If we fail to do as He commands we will find ourselves in an eternal predicament from which we will never escape! Since we know from our study that hell exists and that God has promised to send the majority of mankind to this place of eternal punishment, the only way we'll avoid this fate is to be a part of the group God has promised not to send to hell.

Failure to understand the Biblical concept of love

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has led to much false teaching in the religious world today. When an English-speaking person hears the word "love" he generally thinks of the warm emotional ties he has with his wife, family, friends, or others in his life. The Greek word for this type of love is *phileo*. However, *phileo* is used only 25 times in the entire New Testament. Only twice is the word used to reference the love God has for a human being! Jesus states in John 16:26-27, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." In Revelation 3:19 we read, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." "Loveth" in John 16 and "love" in Revelation 3 are both *phileo* in the Greek. Each time *phileo* is used to reference God's feelings toward man it was limited to those who were obedient to His commandments. In contrast to *phileo* the Holy Spirit through the pen of the inspired writers instructed them to use the word *agape* (or the verb *agapao*) 258 times! The word translated "love" in Romans 5:8 is *agape*. What is the difference between these two words? Unlike *phileo*, *agape* does not carry with it in its meaning the warm emotional type of love we think of today. *Agape* refers to the attitude one has toward another. When I determine to do what is best for you regardless of my emotional attachment to you, I have *agape* love for you. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:44 to, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;". Many people stumble over this verse because of their misunderstanding of love as commanded in the Bible. Jesus isn't commanding us to have a warm emotional attachment for our enemies. He is commanding us to have the attitude toward our enemies that we will do what is best for them no matter what! This is the love God had for us while we were sinners. His attitude toward us was such that He was willing to send Jesus to die on the cross despite our sinfulness. When we understand God's love for us we understand how God may hate those who work iniquity at the same time He loved them. His love for them was not an emotional attachment. He gave them what they needed to receive forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life in heaven. However, if they refuse to obey His commandments and die in their sinful state His hatred for them will be manifest as pure wrath as they are condemned to an eternity in hell.

The Bible tells us much about hell and the torments the condemned will suffer. They are included in the paragraphs above, but I'd like to list them in our summary for quick reference and consideration:

1. Fire that shall never be quenched (Mark 9:43-48)
2. The "worm dieth not" (Mark 9:44,46)
3. Fire that is everlasting (Matthew 18:7-9)
4. Separated from the Lord forever (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
5. Separated from the power of God forever (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
6. The memory is intact, giving the condemned an eternity to remember how they condemned themselves to an

eternity of torment (Luke 16:25)

7. Darkness beyond that ever experienced on earth (Matthew 8:10-12; 1 John 1:5)
8. An eternity to hear the weeping and cries of those who are condemned with no hope (Matthew 8:10-12)
9. An eternity to experience the biting of those condemned with you (and to bite them as well) (Matthew 8:10-12)
10. An eternity to smell the stench of rotten eggs (Revelation 21:8)
11. An eternity to experience a parched tongue, more severe than any ever experienced by the condemned while on earth (Luke 16:22-24)
12. An eternity without love (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 John 4:7,8)
13. The majority of mankind will spend eternity in torment (Matthew 7:13,14)
14. Those in hell will be absolutely forgotten by their loved ones in heaven (Revelation 21:4)

Think of what this list means! In hell, each and every one of our five senses is tormented. Imagine being in the darkest room you've ever entered while at the same time hearing the unceasing wails of the hopeless, being burned by fire which emits no light, having the condemned gnashing their teeth upon you, smelling an overwhelming stench of rotten eggs, and having a tongue that is more dry than any you'd ever before experienced. Now add to this nightmare the realization that you brought each and every torment upon yourself. You remember how you could have easily avoided this fate had you only accepted the gift that was given to you freely. You remember the love you experienced during your lifetime and realize that you will never again feel such comfort. Whose wails are you hearing? Not only your fellow condemned, but your own as well!

The next time you burn your finger, the next time you hear something frightening, the next time you smell an offensive odor, the next time you can't wait to get a drink of water to quench your thirst, and the next time you are frightened by the dark think of how your senses will be tormented to an unimaginable degree for an unending length of time should you be condemned to hell for eternity. The next time you are lost on a dark street in an unfamiliar city, wondering if anyone cares at all for you and hoping the next person you see doesn't intend to assault you remember the absolute loneliness the condemned experience in hell. Use these momentary discomforts as a reminder of the torments of hell, and use them as motivation to remain faithful to Jesus. If you have yet to be obedient to the commandments of God I pray the temporary displeasures we all experience in life may be another motivation leading you to obedience.

We see from our study of hell that the three websites we introduced earlier are all teaching false doctrine. Ed Viswanathan was given accurate information when he was told that he is leading many to eternal destruction along with him. The author at "bible411.com" couldn't be more wrong when he claims, "At the conclusion of this investigation of the Bible use of the word hell, thank God, we find no such place of everlasting torture in the Bible!" And those practicing "liberal Christianity" as documented at religious-

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tolerance.org will be surprised at the day of judgment should they not repent of their iniquity and enter into the love of God. Paul tells us where we will find the love of God: In Christ Jesus! He writes, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38,39) So the love of God upon which so many depend is found only in Christ Jesus. Those who are not in Christ Jesus are already separated from the love of God! Are you in Christ Jesus?

What is keeping you from serving Jesus? Whatever it may be, that is what will keep you from entering heaven for eternity. Is it physical pleasure, worries, stubbornness, love of family over God, religious tradition, or another of the many snares Satan places in our paths? Again, whatever it is it will keep you out of heaven. Jesus was willing to serve us (Philippians 2:5-8, John 10:17,18). He was willing to leave the glory of heaven and suffer the agonies He experienced on earth simply out of obedience to His Father and love for us. He didn't have to die; He gave up His life on His own (John 10:17-18). Are you willing to give up the pleasures of this life to serve Him? If you are, the reward will be unimaginable. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." These preparations can be yours if you are willing to give up the things that keep you from serving Jesus. Won't you do so today, before it is eternally too late? You may read of what you must do to be saved elsewhere in my website (First Principles). Within the links page I have included a list of the congregations of the churches of Christ around the world. Any one will be more than happy to assist you in your obedience to the word of God. Please do so TODAY!

The information in this study was taken from my website. The domain is www.noee.net. I am always in the process of writing and publishing new studies to the site. Please log on and continue your consideration of God's word through the internet. I have provided an e-mail link and will be happy to answer any questions which may arise. This material is not copyrighted. It is free for anyone to use. However, I require it be used to the glory of God, be provided to others free-of-charge, and not be associated with any man-made doctrines or creeds. My sole purpose for writing this article was to teach my fellow man of God's word, with the sincere prayer that by this material His name might be glorified and that many may come to know and obey the truth.

David H. Lasseter

