

Their Worm Does Not Die

By

Gary Wentz

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Chapter One:

Good God—Who is He really?

Will the real God please sit on the throne?

At the heart of this study is a simple question: What is the true nature of God?

Immediately, this leads to other, more pointed questions. Is He capricious, like the demon-god of Islam? Is He all fluffy and soft, like a teddy bear? Is He vengeful and harsh? Does He have horrible mood swings that rip us apart in His thrashing? Is He all mystery with no reveal of Who He really is? We're going to go there and look Him in the face. We will do this by examining His words as given in the Bible. We will do our best to determine His real nature—Who He truly is.

As you can tell by my use of capital letters for any pronoun that has to do with this God, I have a bias. I actually have a deep respect and love for my Creator. So I am not coming at this without my own opinions. If I were, I might not be of any use to you or God. I do have a bias. Of course I do. We all do. Even when our minds are not made up and we are agnostic, we still have a certain bent one way or the other.

Is He Vengeful?

The Bible is full of messaging and stories that show the “darker side” of God’s personality. If it were not there, we would not be asking about it. We can all tell when

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anger, wrath, vengeance, or retaliation are in place. It's obvious to anyone.

And we all have a deep sense of morality that has been imprinted into our innermost parts. We call it our conscience. And we learn that it was God (the Creator) Who put it there. It's been built into our code, so to speak.

So, here's the big question: Is vengeance something evil? Does killing a human always come out as being morally bad? I think it depends. And who decides what is moral and what is immoral, anyway? Do we fallen people make up the rules, or do we turn to the Creator of the cosmos to get His take on it? For me, I turn to Him.

And when we turn to His input on this we quickly find out something profound. Vengeance is His to wield, not ours. Like it or not, there are things that He can do that we cannot. Don't agree with this? No problem. Go ahead and create life. Go on. I'll not hold my breath though. I know that you are like me. And I cannot create life. So neither can you. Oh, sure, I can plant my seed into a female and together we get to see life spring up in her from that union. But we are not doing the creating, are we? That is just operating within the framework created by the Creator.

And this is what He is always reminding us of: We must do things his way. Sometimes, we have no choice. We must breathe in air, for example. That is His way. That is how He made us. If we do not breathe in air, we cease to live in this world. But not all of His rules are that consequential with immediate results. Some things are less immediate or obvious.

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Take, for example, morals. He programmed them into our makeup like everything else. But according to His plan we can ignore those rules. This is called our choice. We can choose to ignore His ways for us in this. And boy do we!

I find it funny that not only do we choose to ignore His moral code but we turn it right back onto Him, as if it applies to Him as much as it does to us. Why is this funny? Does He have to breathe in and out the same air that we do? No? Then why does He have to follow the rules that He programmed into our makeup? Can we not simply allow Him to be Him and us to be us, while being completely different on certain levels?

Here's what I think trips us up. He told us right up front that we are made in His likeness. I think that partially means that we have the same kind of take on these deeper issues. I mean, we can tell the difference between right and wrong since He gave us that ability that He has. If He did not, we would not have it and we would not be able to judge the Judge.

So, when we get into the heavy items, like murder of humans, we begin to take this seriously. After all, it might impact us deeply. And if this same Being Who can generate life decides to remove it, what can we do about it but fear Him? Is judging Him really the best option at that point? I don't think so. After all, He did tell us that having fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom. And I want some wisdom in my life. So I fear Him Who can remove my life.

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Does He use vengeance against us when we break His rules for us? Uh huh. Can we judge Him over that? Nuh uh. It is not for us creatures, with our very limited understanding compared to Him, to judge Him. Doing so will only infuriate Him further. And I'd rather not go down that path, personally. But hey, you have every opportunity to do so if that's what you want. He won't stop you and neither will I.

Vengeance is His to wield, not mine. And I couldn't stop Him if I wanted to. So I'll not judge the Judge, while not doing what He said not to do. And I'll accept the premise that His rules are for us but not for Him. Like it or not.

As we go through this study, I'm going to try to convince you that God is not a big mean ogre Who kills people indiscriminately just because He can. That He is not a bully Who cannot be stopped. If that is your opinion of Him, I don't know if I can help you with that or not, honestly. But I will try. If you do not want to be convinced, then either keep reading or do not. Your call.

Is God Good?

What is goodness? Do you know? Can you write it up in a poem or a song or a book? I'll bet you could give at least a cursory explanation to a child (who probably gets it as much as you do, if not better). The knowledge of good and evil entered our makeup as soon as the first humans found out what the alternative was—evil. Goodness was their natural state, until they corrupted it with evil. But now we all know the difference between good and evil.

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I guess that will make this a quick section for you then. Still, for the sake of completeness and following the Bible's lead, I'll share what it says about it.

Love is good. But what is love? Well, it isn't boastful or proud. It isn't self-seeking, rude, or judgmental. It doesn't keep a record of all the wrongs against it. It's gentle, kind, patient and giving (generously). It takes care of those in need and leaves others alone when they want to be left alone. It provides, nurtures, and tends to the needs of others. That's the way of goodness.

Does God do these things for us? Yep. All the time. Continuously, actually. For everyone. In fact, the patience of God is measured in lifetimes, not minutes. For Him, a millennium is like a single day. That's because He is outside of His created time and cosmos. (But being out does not mean He cannot be in at the same time.) We call God's care for us His Providence. He provides all that we need, all the time. Not necessarily what we want, but what we need. And that is an expression of His goodness toward us.

And more than that, this habitat we live in has an effect on our happiness. He programmed us with the ability to enjoy the world (as broken up as it is currently). Sunrises and sunsets, for example, just hit a soft spot in the brain and heart. Beauty of all kinds surrounds us everywhere. Food that we must eat can be very pleasing. Procreating with each other for continued existence can be rewarding too. That's just God's design in action. This means that His goodness is apparent to everyone all the time.

So, yes, God is good. And I'll have a lot more to say about this as we go on.

Is God Evil?

I guess the first question becomes, how would we even know? I mean, if He did not allow us to have the ability to understand the difference between good and evil, judging Him would never even come up.

And here's a funny thing to ponder: when the first two people were made by Him they had no evil in them at all. Evil was possible, but not inherent. They had to actually *do* something to introduce evil into their makeup. But before that, the concept was not even in them.

And to really crank up the irony, God knew about evil, but did not do anything that was evil. But our kind had to experience it to know it. Do you get it? He knew it without ever using it; we had to use it to know it. Funny.

But because He gave us our rules about these things, so we could understand, we now have the opportunity to try to turn it back on Him. Unfortunately for us, that does not work. We are still very far from truly understanding Him and His nature. All we can do is take Him at His word. That would be a good idea. And since true wisdom comes from fearing His unlimited power and righteousness (judgment), it would behoove us to be wise enough to not judge Him as if He were one of us—working according to human rules, or rules for humanity.

It's just a way of life. God's rules for us do not always apply to Him. Like it or not.

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And not only is God not evil, but there is not even a hint or a trace of it in Him and there never was or will be.

This is going to matter a whole lot as we go forward with this study. It is something that those who claim Him as Lord seem to have forgotten about.

How do we know God is good? We look at His actions. We read His Word. We see His heart.

Did He create us with the ability to enjoy life? Did He hold anything back that we need for life? Is He permissive or harsh? Is the world beautiful to us?

Clearly, He has provided for us in a way that shows us the beauty of His creation, which tells us of His good nature.

The Bad News

Just as clearly as seeing good in the world, we can also see that it is not all great. Bad things are here too. Things like illness, death, hardship, evil, enemies...the list is just as long as the one for the good things. But even the bad can have a silver lining.

Death is not great. But it is necessary. It is a consequence. A remedy, if you will. A gift. You see, if we were to be immortal in this condition of having evil in us, then we would always have misery, since evil brings misery. But luckily for us, God's providence includes a remedy for our condition.

What is death? It is separation. You see, we as humans are triune in our being, like God is. We are a soul

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that has a spirit, that lives in a body. Death is the separation of the eternal part of us from the temporary part of us. Upon death, the soul and spirit leave the physical body and go to a separate place I call the spirit realm. The physical body stays here in the physical realm and returns to the basic building blocks by breaking down through decay. The body's structure decomposes to the atoms that it is comprised of. From those molecules and atoms (called "dust" in the Bible) the body was first formed by God. Then, upon death, just as He said, the body returns to that dust.

Entropy is the same thing for all matter. It is a breaking down of the structure, form, and function of God's creation. This is His response to our injection of evil into our makeup.

All we can see with our physical eyeballs is how death brings decay. We can't see the soul and spirit of a person ascend into the heavenly realm. So, in our ignorance, we just think that death is a bad thing. We may have loved that person in that body that is now decaying. It hurts. A lot. So we might curse God for giving us death, while not realizing what it is there for.

Therefore, what we see as bad news is actually good news. Why is it good? Because, through death we get to lose the flesh that is not good. And there is even more good news than that. You see, God needed to give us death as humans so that He could provide a way for our evil to be atoned. That is why Jesus is so important to the story of mankind. He is actually the Creator, dressed in the same outfit that we all are—humanity.

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If you don't know, God decreed and declared that evil must pay a price—since we are the ones who brought it into our bodies. And He said that the price is a sacrifice of blood (the life force of the body). Why this is, I have no idea. I just know that it is what He has declared. And thank God for it. But the sacrifice has to be perfect. Hmm. That one point makes it impossible for us to pay the price, since none of us is good and perfect. So it forces us to depend on His providence. Not a bad thing. Just know that it is the thing. The one thing.

The Good News

So with all of this hanging over our heads, we need to listen to Him and what His solution is for our inner pollution—the issue with the tissue.

He didn't leave us hanging. He stepped into the same kind of envirosuit that our souls have—a human body. A perfect one with the knowledge of evil but not the use of it. His body had to be free from any kind of evil at all, just like Him.

And that's what He did. He placed a perfect little embryo into the womb of a young lady and came out as a perfect little baby boy, inhabiting that body. He bypassed the problem with the DNA (Depraved Nature of Adam) we all have been born with by not using her egg or a man's sperm. (Sorry Catholics, Mary was just as sinful as anyone else.) And then He did the most amazing thing. He declared His perfect body to be the payment (through death) to atone for our own evil. Amazing.

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The way for that act to pay for you personally is to receive it by believing it will be enough. We call it faith. And that faith must be accompanied by the understanding that you need it. You must admit that you have an evil inside of you that nothing else can remedy. And if you don't want it, then it won't work. That is called repentance. The deeper part of it says that you hate that evil in you and want it gone.

Unfortunately, you will continue to have that evil nature until the body dies (separates from your soul/spirit). And for this reason, many don't see that it is effective or even helpful. But fortunately, as you give yourself over to God, that evil nature begins to lose its influence over you. And hopefully, His influence takes root and you grow into a better human being. But alas, it is not guaranteed and so again people lose faith. That's what makes the whole thing so iffy for most people.

If you have received the faith in what God did for you (the death of Jesus on the cross) then don't give up on that faith for as long as you walk and chew gum. Then, when your soul leaves this physical realm and your own little habitat (your body), you will be welcomed into a new kind of life. That's the plan. Follow it and live. I call it life support.

There is a lot more to this—and why the book doesn't end here. Stick with me while we go through it so that you will see the bigger hope we can latch onto going forward.

God's Nature in the Bible

Here are some verses from God's Word that describe His nature. See if it sounds like He is good or evil.

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Deuteronomy 32:4 — He is the Rock, His work is perfect; all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness without injustice, righteous and upright is He.

Malachi 3:6 — I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed.

Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Colossians 1:17 — He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

1 John 1:5 — "God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all."

John 14:6 — Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life".

Psalms 86:15 — "But you, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23 — Because of the loving devotion of the LORD we are not consumed, for His

mercies never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!

God's Balancing Act

Those were all verses that describe His loving side. But He also has a righteous, or just side. That is the part of His nature that punishes evil. And I will just say flatly that any judge who does not punish evil is no judge worth having in the seat (or on the throne—in heaven or Earth).

And this is why we are to fear Him. We don't fear His loving side; we fear His side that punishes evil. Why? Because we are all evil at our core from conception. I respected my father because he was not afraid to use his belt on my butt when I disobeyed him or did something wrong. If he did not ever use the belt, I may have not had the respect for him that I did.

A good man is not always a nice guy. (Remember this you young men.) A good man says "no" when he needs to. He fights evil when it comes to his house. He protects his family from those who would bring harm to them. And he corrects his children for their own good. If you do not agree, then you have never been attacked or put in danger, or had an unruly and dangerous teen. This is why policemen carry guns and other weapons. This is why we have a military. This is why we have prisons and jails. And it is why God has a severe side.

He is only harsh to people because they deserve it. Do we always understand His judgments? No, we don't.

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But we trust in His nature that tells us (shows us) that His ways are right.

When He destroyed the entire world in a “flood” (it was much more than just a flood) it was because all the people were out of control, being completely evil.

When He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, it was because they were completely evil, doing disgusting things to and with each other.

When His people were entering into the land that God gave them, there were people groups there that were against Him and His ways. And because those people would have affected His own people’s hearts and minds He told His people to utterly wipe them out. Like all the others, they did horrible things, such as child sacrifices to idols and demons. And if they had not been destroyed, they would have become a cancer to the people of God. Their ways would have been destructive to the ways of God for His people. He knows all things—we do not.

From the Tower of Babel, where He confused their language into the many we have now, to the plagues of Egypt when Pharaoh would not let His people go, to the Red Sea escape and Egypt’s army perishing in the waters, to the Israelites’ dead bodies being strewn across the desert, to individuals who opposed Him and His will, to many wars and battles and even up to the wrath He will unleash when Jesus returns, God will act according to His righteousness. He will have justice. And every time it is just. It is deserved. It is right. We do not know the hearts of men, women, and children, but He does.

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We are all evil. He is all good. We cannot therefore judge His righteous acts. We can only trust that He is good and will always do what is right.

This is why I both fear Him and love Him.

Matthew 10:28 — *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Not that He will destroy your soul. Not that hell lasts forever, but the point is clear — He is to be feared because of His awesome power, complete knowledge of every thought in every heart and mind, and His perfect righteousness that demands justice.

You may certainly judge Him. He will let you. In fact, He is permissive enough to give you all the rope you need to hang yourself. And I will add that we always, without exception have brought this upon ourselves. As a race, as nations, as individuals. Mankind is always to blame for God’s acts of vengeance against us.

When people go to hell or the Lake of Fire (not the same thing, by the way), it is always because their actions put them there. We tend to think that because He is permissive and we get away with things we should not have that there will never be a reckoning. But this is folly and false. He will repay all evil. All of it. And the more you stack up against yourself, the worse it will be for you.

It won’t be lightning coming down, necessarily, it might be solitary confinement in hell for a thousand years. Whatever the shape of it, it will be deserved. For He is just.

Coming Wrath

I laugh when I hear people talk about the God of the Old Testament being one kind and the God of the New Testament being another kind. Like, vengeful versus loving. I guess they never read the book of Revelation.

As one who has studied the End Times for over 30 years, I can tell you without a doubt that the return of Jesus will be very frightful for all on Earth. Well, some might be happy to see Him finally showing up in the sky. I see myself being one of those if I'm here. And I might be here. We are closer to His return than ever. In my own studies of the current age of the world and His return, I think it could be as soon as ten years from now (this is 2026). But that's not the point.

The point is that when the loving Savior returns, Who gave us all the great teachings on love, it will be in anger and vengeance. Then, after meting out God's wrath, He will sit on His throne over the earth and rule with an iron rod. That means that He will execute justice upon those who need it. And justice goes both ways: Great for the victims and horrible for the perpetrators.

So remember this: God is the same, yesterday (the past), today (the current time), and forever (the future). He will not let evil go unpunished (with one exception). If we repent (show sorrow) for our evil and turn from it and receive His Son in faith, we can then be pardoned and not receive His wrath. That is it. No other escape route exists. I highly recommend that plan.

Group Discussion and Reflection

In all of my books, I offer some questions at the end of each chapter for group study or individual reflection.

Questions

1. What's your own take on God's personality? Is he good or evil?
2. Do you think that it is possible to both fear God and love Him?
3. Whose fault is it that there is suffering in the world, mankind's or God's?
4. When Jesus returns, He will execute fiery death upon the world. Few will survive. Does this make you want to not follow Him?

Answers

These are all questions that do not have a solid, right or wrong answer. You must come up with your own. But I'll share my own answers with you anyway. These are my answers. You will have your own. And be gracious with others who have their own.

1. God is good in all things all the time.
2. I do both. I have for decades.
3. I see it as man's fallen nature causing the rift with us and God, forcing His hand against us.
4. I can't wait for Jesus to return. He will do what He needs to do. I never judge the Judge.

Chapter Two: Words Have Meaning—Grammar Matters

Now we shift to some rather nerdy grammar and heavily technical jargon. Sorry if that's not your thing, but it matters (as the chapter title suggests). And without this bedrock being laid, the whole thing collapses into just another opinion without the Word of God being at the heart of it.

And in all of this I am being as true to the Word as I possibly can be. I always am. I care more about God's truth than just about anything.

Things in this chapter are going to shake you. You might even get upset with me. Sorry if that's you.

Language

I'm no scholar. I don't understand the two main languages in the original texts of the Bible: Hebrew and Greek. What I *do* have is the ability to look up every word in the Bible and see how the original language was used.

This is done, and can be done, by anyone with a thing called a *Concordance*. It's like a dictionary for the Bible's original languages. I don't think that Arabic is in the concordance, but it's hardly used at all. And I'm really only going to be concerned with just a few (very few) words here in this study.

So if you're a scholar who reads Hebrew and/or Greek, this might be either fun for you or terrifying. Ha! I'll let you be the judge of that. I mean no offense.

Words Have Meaning

If words didn't have strict or at least reliable meaning, how could we use them at all? We couldn't. We might as well just go, "*buh, buh, buh, buh*" to each other all the time. Right? I mean, it works for talking to God, but not each other.

And when we get into something that really matters, like ... I don't know ... Eternal Conscious Torment, it might be a good thing to get a good grip on the words and grammar used, no? So that is what this chapter is all about — getting it right.

I am going to share a very specific idiom or two with you and unpack it in a manner that any English or language teacher might appreciate. And if you share my desire to understand God's Word to the utmost, you might appreciate it too.

Forever in Hebrew

There's our first word. Forever. Funny, I thought "forever" meant "eternally". Turns out that it really doesn't mean that in a few places in the Bible. What do I mean? Hang on, you're about to find out. I'm going to show you some verses that use both the Hebrew from the Old Testament and the Greek from the New Testament. Here we go.

First, understand that Hebrew is a looser language than the European languages of Latin and English. In Hebrew, they might be saying something is forever and mean that it goes for the duration of some thing or era. Like a person's life. People do not live on Earth eternally.

Here's our first example:

Exodus 21 describes a servant who loves his master and voluntarily chooses lifetime service to him. (Before anyone gets upset — this is nothing like the slavery of Africans in America, Europe, and the Middle East in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was the servant's own choice.)

"...then his master is to bring him before the judges. And he shall take him to the door or doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he shall serve his master for life." (Exodus 21:6) Ouch! And I thought that gauges were bad.

Did you catch the last words? *For life*. The Hebrew word used there is *olam* — the very word rendered "forever" all over your Old Testament, and older English Bibles say exactly that right here: "he shall serve him for ever." The BSB translators used "for life." And they got it right (one reason why I like that translation). Why? Because that is what *olam* means in this verse — as long as either man lives. The translators themselves know the word bends to fit its object. So, *olam* can mean "as long as the arrangement lasts." That's the meaning of the Hebrew in this particular case.

So, a Hebrew word for forever is *olam*. And it does not always mean what we think it might mean by using our

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brains that are wired for a more technical or direct meaning. In fact, in the Hebrew language words are more situational than they might be in Latin or English.

Ready for another?

Our second example is something that can be verified with a trip to the Middle East. Let's read Isaiah 34:9-10:

*“Edom's streams will be turned to tar, and her soil to sulfur; her land will become a blazing pitch. It will not be quenched day or night; its smoke will ascend **forever**.”*

There it is again, *olam*. This time it is translated directly as *forever*. Where is this Edom? It's in the modern country of Jordan in the Middle East, southeast of the Dead Sea. And guess what? No burning tar, sulfur, or pitch. That cleanly takes this use of the word away from a literal eternal meaning. Edom was the land of Jacob's brother Esau. Esau and Edom both mean “red”. So if you know a guy named “Red”, you can call him Esau or Edom. Same thing.

Am I ruining the meaning of words here? No. I'm showing you that different cultures with different languages approach it differently. Hebrews (Jews) are a bit looser in their vernacular (word choices) than we English speakers might be today—but we get pretty loose with words ourselves too. Like, “Sup, dawg?” Or, “That was sick!” Are you getting this? Hang on, just one more from the Hebrew, then we can move on.

Our third example is from the adventures of Jonah, that guy who was swallowed by a fish (not a whale). In fact, while he was inside this fish, being taken to the place he was trying hard to avoid, he prayed this prayer:

“To the roots of the mountains I descended; the earth beneath me barred me in forever! But You raised my life from the pit, O LORD my God!” (Jonah 2:6)

Obviously, he lived and was taken to Nineveh, where the Lord wanted him to go (and made sure he did). But we can go just a bit deeper into this and say that the earth beneath him could not have barred him in forever (eternally) anyway. Why not? Because we learn in the book of Revelation that the sea gives up its dead at the final judgment. And we also learn there that death itself is done away with.

So in this one example, we see that there are three (count them, three) solid reasons why that word for forever does not mean what we think it means today: 1) He got out right away (not forever); 2) The sea gives up its dead at the end of the Millennium; 3) and the earth itself vanishes before the New Earth is created.

Olam. Not forever all the time. Can it mean forever? Sure. Especially when it speaks of God’s eternal nature or other things. But we do not have to take it to mean forever all the time. That is going to be very important in this study. We will get there.

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The main takeaway here is that it depends on the *context* of its use. We have to actually use our brains to figure out what is meant by that word.

Forever in Greek

How about the Greek? Do we see the Greek using its words in the same manner? Yep. In fact, there is a close connection to how Hebrew uses its words and Greek.

And for this reason, we don't see any real errors creep in between the Hebrew and the Greek translations. Early Bibles written in Greek for the Old Testament are right-on in their translation of the Hebrew. One of the earliest (maybe THE earliest Greek translation, certainly the oldest surviving one) is called the *Septuagint*, often abbreviated as LXX. It's a Bible that translated the Old Testament into Greek. And since Greek was the dominant language in the early days before and during Christ, it was like our use of English today around the world. The common tongue of the area.

So, all of those idioms that don't really mean forever in the Hebrew also don't mean it in the Greek versions of those Old Testament verses.

But to take it a step further, since the New Testament was written in Greek, we can find some verses there that use the very same idioms.

Here's a clear one:

“He was separated from you for a little while, so that you might have him back forever.” — Philemon 1:15

That is about a slave that left his master and went to find Paul (probably Onesimus, who likely left with Epaphras, who helped the Colossians convert to Christ). But that’s another story. The thing is the use of the Greek word translated as forever — *aiōn*. Here, it didn’t mean forever.

Just like in the Hebrew, *aiōn* does not always mean a literal eternity. In fact, based on the use of the idiom, *forever and ever*, I’m going to say that even that phrase may not mean eternally. Why? Because in the Hebrew, translated into Greek in the Septuagint, the phrase does not mean eternally in every case. One case is the thing about Edom we already looked at. And since idioms can translate from Hebrew to Greek very easily, that is my suggestion going forward in a very important example.

In our example above about Isaiah 34:9-10, the Septuagint did NOT translate the phrase into forever and ever. Why not? Because they understood what the original actually meant. But if we look at it in the Latin Vulgate and the earliest of Latin translations before that, we get *forever and ever* in the most emphatic sense. THAT is where a huge translation error created a big dogma kerfuffle farther downstream.

So, the problem with this translation error, which might seem legitimate on the face of it, actually created a doctrine — no, a dogma — much later that has been

responsible for billions of people shunning God based on a wrong perception of His character and judgment.

Not because of the story of Edom. But because of the account of the Lake of Fire in the book of Revelation, which uses the exact same idiom in Latin translations.

Is this a strong and emphatic observation? Not to the point of being explicit in the Bible and therefore obvious. But it does raise a legitimate question as to the character of God. Does the God Who was emphatic about forgiving others actually intend to keep people in eternal conscious torment? Well, looking at our discussion in Chapter One, my inkling is to say not necessarily.

But let's get to the heart of this directly from the Bible. Let's go to the part about the Lake of Fire in the book of Revelation.

Eternal Suffering?

Let's jump right into some Bible verses to read.

Revelation 14:9-11 — *And a third angel followed them, calling out in a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on his forehead or on his hand, he too will drink the wine of God's anger, poured undiluted into the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented in fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And **the smoke of their torment** rises forever and ever. Day and night there is no rest for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name."*

Here's another:

Revelation 20:10 — *“And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, into which the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown. There **they will be tormented** day and night forever and ever.”*

This is interesting and it is worth mentioning.

Look how one verse uses language about the **smoke** of their torment and the other discusses **them** being tormented. That distinction may not be trivial. In fact, it might be very important, if cryptic.

There is no room in 20:10 for the place being what is forever. It is about the ones in it. In this case, it is Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet. Three heavy-hitters who are collectively responsible for more suffering of humanity than (likely) all others combined. And if I am reading this correctly, which is certainly debatable (I freely concede), it could mean that the PLACE is their torment in 14:11, which lasts forever, not necessarily THEM being in it forever. The place is forever, while their being there may not be.

Is it a weak reading? You can argue that if you like. But if it is saying that all people in the Lake of Fire have zero hope of repentance for all eternity, we are back to the character of our Creator God. I mean, if a person who has been decent to others and only makes the mistake of taking the Mark of the Beast on their hand or forehead in the Great Tribulation, is it really consistent with God's character to

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keep them in torment for trillions of millennia for a single moment's error in judgment under duress? You be the one who decides for yourself. I can only point to the chance for the meaning to be something else. And that is what this book is partly about.

Indeed, the opportunity is there for the musing. For me, I see there being an opportunity for a person in the Lake of Fire to actually repent and call out to Jesus for forgiveness in their moment of betrayal toward Him.

Now an important disclaimer or two. I am not being dogmatic about this. I am merely questioning it in light of Who Christ is. In all of this there are two very important things to keep tethered to: 1) It depends on the person's repentance. 2) It depends on Christ's judgment.

Notably, the only place in Scripture where eternal torment is explicitly applied to named persons — not just the place of punishment — is Revelation 20:10, and those persons are Satan, antichrist, and the false prophet. That construction is not repeated for mankind as a class anywhere in the canon.

Will Satan ever repent? Not likely. Will Antichrist and his false prophet ever repent? Dunno. But if they do, it will still be up to Jesus to decide if He will accept their repentance or not. And another important disclaimer is that Satan and his fallen horde of angels are NOT human. Antichrist and the false prophet are. I am really only discussing humans, not angels. And even humans might be so corrupt and their sins so egregious that either they do not repent or Jesus flat-out refuses it.

I hope that this is clear to you. I am not trying to twist the Bible. I am trying to remain faithful to the character of God in light of a very complicated and difficult passage. This is the heart of this book. It reflects my own heart that is for Jesus in every way at all times. I want no one to suffer, just like He does. I want everyone to repent, just like He does. And I believe that His judgments—all of them—are just and right and good.

Am I trying to make it so that no suffering exists for shunning God and His will? Not for one second. Am I trying to twist things to say that mankind is simply annihilated by the Lake of Fire? No. That is nonsensical anyway. Why not just annihilate them? There is no Lake of Fire needed for that. And the idea of Eternal Conscious Torment for everyone that erred is not really consistent in my mind with the character of Jesus and the Father and Their Holy Spirit.

Grammar

Sorry, not quite done yet. There's one more point to look at. I entitled this chapter to include grammar.

What grammar am I talking about? It's in the book of Isaiah, chapter 66, verse 24. That is actually where the book title comes from. Let's dive into the Lake of Fire discussion there.

Isaiah 66:24 — *“As they go forth, they will see the corpses of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their worm will never die, their fire will never be quenched, and they will be a horror to all mankind.”*

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This is going to get a bit technical.

Let's just take it as it comes, okay?

"As they go forth..." As who goes forth? Where are they? It's in the text. Chapter 65 has already set up the location and time. Here it is:

Isaiah 65:17 — *"For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

That is the when and where. It is on the New Earth in the new creation. That is a time after this world has passed away and is no more. But we can get even more specific about the place. We move on to the next chapter.

Isaiah 66:23 — *From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come to worship before Me," says the LORD.*

Where is Jesus located for them to come to Him monthly and yearly? In the New Jerusalem. And New Jerusalem is located on the New Earth. And so, going back to the next verse, #24, we see that those who are entering and leaving the New Jerusalem are the ones who see the Lake of Fire and those who are in it.

For this reason, I believe that the Lake of Fire is like a moat of lava around the New Jerusalem (hence the book's cover depicting a lava lake). After all, it is something like 1,380 miles to a side. There are open gates on all four sides. This tells me that the Lake of Fire is to be seen by all who "go forth" (entering and leaving the city). All are going to see the Lake of Fire.

Does this make sense? It isn't like it's an easy thing to go all the way around to the east side if you live on the west side of the holy city. A moat makes the most sense if Isaiah is using plain language. And why would he not? If the message can be explained in a straightforward manner, why muddle it with nonsense?

And if it is only a couple or few hundred meters across, it would be able to hold billions of occupants as it stretches around the entire city. Would it need to be deep? No. It needs to be shallow for the ones in it to be seen.

Let's keep going in verse 24.

"...they will see the corpses of the men who have rebelled against Me"

Uh oh. We just hit a snag. This does not really match the Hebrew. It might seem like it does if you pull out your Concordance and just read the translation there. But the people who put together that book had a thing in mind already about this when they wrote it. Bias has crept in so subtly. I'll show you. It is in the *grammar* where we get to the heart of this error.

Our English concordance says "those who *have rebelled*" — past tense, a finished crime. The Hebrew word is *happosh'im*, an active participle. If you've never opened a grammar book, here's all you need: Hebrew had a perfectly ordinary way to say "who rebelled", done and completed. Isaiah didn't use it. He used the form of ongoing action — "the ones *rebelli*ng against me." Present tense. Live. The rebellion isn't a crime on their record; it's a condition still

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running, right there in the scene, while all humanity files past. They are still in rebellion!

Why is this important to my theory here?

Ongoing rebellion can come to an end. If it stops, then maybe (just maybe) the torment will too. This is the crux of the hope that I am describing for you here. Like I said earlier, if they stop rebelling, maybe Jesus will forgive them. It's their call first, then it's His call second. See how this is shaking out? I'm not twisting things. I'm keeping them straight.

But wait, there's more.

"...for their worm will never die..."

Ah, the title of this book is right there. *Their Worm Does Not Die*. Here is the interesting part about this one verse: The worm is singular. And it is theirs. This will come into play in the next chapter. But it is something they possess, not maggots or parasites eating their flesh. Let's keep going since this gets its own treatment later.

"...their fire will never be quenched..."

Their fire is the fire assigned to them in this place. The very place itself. Like this is our planet. We do not actually own Earth. But it is our home. Our planet. Same thing here. It is their fire assigned to them — or them assigned to it. One more thing in the passage.

"...and they will be a horror to all mankind."

Clearly, the sight is not a pretty one. It is to give them a visceral reaction to what happens to those who rebel

against God. I say that it is there for deterrence to all who live on the New Earth. After all, everything about New Earth for the mortals who live there is geared toward God's will and presence in their lives. And as you will see in the next chapter, the New Earth is a different kind of life altogether. It is not as it is now. The people are not quite like we are now. There are differences that I will point out very shortly.

Conclusion

When we let the Word be true, we take much into consideration. We look at the character of our Good God. How His nature is to be forgiving when people repent and worship Him. We see that errors, however slight in appearance, can make a big impact later in our grasp of God and His Word. We learn that words have meaning in different ways, depending on language and context. We see that grammar is actually a big deal in this effort to fathom the written words of God. And we see that a small error can lead to a big misunderstanding downstream of the error.

And when such an error is turned to dogma that is enforced by human institutions that are willing to truly punish those who do not agree with it, bad things can (and did) happen. One phrase, an idiom — turned from one meaning into another in such a way that probably no one caught or didn't see as worth their life or career or livelihood to oppose — just passed on through the machine. Then it turned into something that has alienated billions of souls from their Creator. Potentially very sad, yes?

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I'm not trying to upset the cart of Christianity or faith in the Bible. Just the opposite. I want everyone to accept the truth of God as presented correctly in His Word. I want all people to come to faith in Jesus, based on His death on the cross to cover our sin. But I do this without concern for the institutions of man. I am loyal to God, not the opinions and interpretations of men.

Group Discussion and Reflection

Questions

1. Does forever always mean forever?
2. Did an error creep in through a very early translation of the Old Testament?
3. Was the error from Hebrew to Greek or Hebrew to Latin?
4. Could the Lake of Fire be on the New Earth surrounding the holy city?
5. Did Isaiah describe worms eating dead bodies or something else? What would it be?

Answers

1. Not always. Sometimes, but not always.
2. It would seem so.
3. Hebrew to Latin. Or even Greek to Latin.
4. It certainly could be. And that is what makes the most sense given the details of Isaiah's account.
5. He described a single worm that the people possess. It is likely their own body.

Chapter Three:

Behold, I make All Things New

Revelation 21:1-2 — Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We turn now to the new creation. But as we do, we can see that our current creation has passed away. It will pass away. In fact, the lifetime of this Earth is but a mere 7,000 years in all. Why do I assert this? It is a belief based on the creation account of it. Why did the Lord take six days to create and one day to rest? Many (and I) believe it is to show the duration of the existence of this earth and its cosmos. 6,000 years of man's rule, followed by 1,000 years of God's rule. That thousand years is called the Millennium. It is when Jesus sits on His throne on Mount Zion and rules the Earth (this earth) with an iron rod, along with His saints.

As I write this in 2026, the year of Earth's age is approximately 5,990 years. If true, that would give us about 10 years before the King of all kings and Lord of all lords returns to take His place above us. He will build a new temple on Zion that is shown in Ezekiel 40 – 48. Then, at the end of the thousand years this earth (the physical realm) and heaven (the spirit realm) will cease to exist and He will judge the living and the dead from His great white throne of judgment. And that is where our passage above sits. We are seeing what will happen at that time of final judgment.

The New Jerusalem

“I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (21:2)

Everything about the New Jerusalem is given here that we need to know. It is just a glimpse of the wondrous and magnificent holy city of God. This is the true eternal heaven. Gone is the one in existence now. This New Jerusalem is heaven. It sits on New Earth, but it is distinct from the new planet.

I am about to show you this marvel of creation. I will share my own understanding of it through the gift of knowledge that my Lord gives to me. I am not claiming any authority in saying that. I am just an ordinary believer with the same gift that many others have. And cross check all I tell you with the Word of God. I claim no authority with my insights. They are only for you to ponder. But ponder them. For they are wondrous to tell and imagine.

Revelation 21:3-5 — *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. ‘He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,’ and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

And the One seated on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are faithful and true.”

Chapter Three: Behold, I make All Things New

Of first importance about this passage is the statement about no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. I have several things to say about this important word.

First, all of these things will actually continue on the New Earth, but *not* in the New Jerusalem. Why do I boldly claim this? It is seen by keeping everything in its proper place. We use the *plain meaning* way of reading scripture, which says take it as it comes. And in context of this passage, we just saw that we are looking at the holy city first. So the statement of none of those things—death included—being present is for the *holy city*, not the planet upon which it sits.

Why the high walls of the city, shown in this 21st chapter of Revelation? Why the angelic guards at the gates (likely imposing figures on a massive scale)? Why the gates? What are we keeping out? The answer is given, and we'll look at that in a bit.

But for now, just remember that all death, sorrow and pain is kept from the interior of the holy city and NOT withheld from the planet it sits on.

Second, the city is the dwelling place of Christ, the Almighty. He is showing His full glory that lights up the cosmos, like our Sun does in this universe. But with a big distinction: glory passes through solid matter. No shadows of broken light. This will light up the entire planet and beyond into the new universe. That is the new heavens beyond the New Earth. By the way, I see other earths orbiting the New Earth like our own solar system of today.

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Not uninhabited — inhabited. But I'll not get into that in this study. You can read *Sheep To Nations* for more on that.

We see in this account a bit later that the city is a giant cube. It is a whopping 12,000 stadia (1,380 miles) to a side. That is about the distance from Albuquerque to Chicago in the US. And it is as tall as it is long and wide! So, if placed on our current planet, Earth would likely wobble from the sheer weight of it — it is made of gold, gemstone, and crystal. And if we consider a person being the same height (for illustration), the International Space Station would hit him below the knees (about 250 miles). That would be another 1,130 miles of wall above that!

Since it is a cube, it reminds us of the Holy of Holies in the previous temples of God. From the Tabernacle to the Millennial Temple that throne room is always a cube. Do you think that those temples were pointing forward to this structure? The final throne room of God? His place of tabernacling with His people?

The walls are a clear crystal, making it visible from without. The foundation stones are pure gemstones of various colors that are placed in the arrangement of a literal rainbow of color. I do not see rock or concrete adorned with precious stones. I see solid slabs of precious stone. Each layer a complete gemstone that is translucent and thick. Is each stone a mile thick? 10 miles thick? Or a mere 100 meters thin? Remember, John said it looked like “a most precious jewel”.

Inside are buildings and roads made of gold. Some commentators foolishly call it *clear* gold. That is silly. Gold

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is gold. But the Greek tells us that the gold is as *pure* as clear glass. We are reading of purity, not clarity.

Now the vision of the city is seen well enough to imagine walls that stretch out of sight to the left and right and upward, sitting on a foundation that radiates a rainbow of color onto the surface of the planet. Remember, the city is lighted from within by the glory of God—Jesus on the throne. And since He is elevated above the foundation stones His radiance bursts through them in a rainbow.

Spread out, perhaps about every 350 miles, is a gate. The gates are likely round, with a single pearl being the gate. Now, are these pearl gates slabs of cut pearl? Or are they spherical and suspended just out from the holes in the walls through which we pass? Since the walls are 144 cubits thick (maybe 216 feet, depending on the cubit), are the pearls that same diameter? I like to imagine that they are hovering just outside the walls, suspended in mid-air, with enough room to walk between them and the wall to enter the city. And a massive angel standing by the opening, spear in hand. What a vision!

Is your concept of heaven boring, or alive? Do you have an idea of some vague, ethereal void in mind? Or something much more alive, vivid and real? If you are an artist, I'd love to see your rendition of this vision of heaven. Make the foundation slightly wider than the walls above for a ledge to travel on between gates (perhaps a hundred meters wide?). Show something like ramps, stairs, or better yet a tram car to take visitors up the high grade to the gates.

That is the New Jerusalem I see in my mind. I base it only on the Word of God and His descriptions, taken at face value.

The New Earth

The planet this holy city is perched upon, like a radiant jewel, must be much larger than this one we are on now. I see it the size of Jupiter, or perhaps our Sun.

But, who is living on this new planet?

We go to Isaiah to learn about life on the New Earth. Many think that he was describing this earth in the Millennium. While I would agree that there are many similarities, I must decline to agree with that assessment. Why? He plainly tells us his vision is of the new creation.

Isaiah 65:17-19 —*For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for I will create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and take delight in My people. The sounds of weeping and crying will no longer be heard **in her**.*

Notice the opening: *I will create new heavens and a new earth*. Notice too that this current world falls from memory. And also (importantly) notice that he reinforces the idea that it is the **New Jerusalem** where the sounds of weeping are no longer heard. He made that distinction, so we should mark it and remember it. Especially when we later get to that part where he describes an important

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feature of the new planet. We save that discussion for the Lake of Fire.

Let us quickly jump back to Revelation 21:1 where John says he saw no sea on the New Earth.

Why is there no sea? Does he mean no oceans at all, or is he making a distinction between that world and this? In our present, broken planet, we have abyssal (deep) oceans between continents. But did you know that the current earth was actually not created this way? No, it's true. If you read my books on the Flood (*This Broken Planet* and *The Broken Planet Model*), you'd know that God showed me in a vision what the pre-Flood world looked like as to its layers within.

The earth we are on had no deep oceans like now. It had surficial seas of sometimes great width but not great depth. So if the New Earth is made like the first one, but grander in scale, it would not have the appearance of ours now. It would be a lush, green planet. Yes, there would be seas and rivers, just not in the volume we have now. You should read *The Broken Planet Model* from my website for free or just read the quicker study in a tract series there called *Noah's Flood Made Easy*. For the series, look for "Books by Gary" in the menu and see the sub-menu for the series off of the book, *This Broken Planet*.

I truly believe that the New Earth will have the same architecture of our pre-Flood Earth of today.

The Two Made One

I'm going to have to speculate here, since it is not clearly enunciated in scripture. But I see the new creation as being a merger of our current realms of spirit and physical matter. This is what makes the most sense to me the further we dive into these details.

The Cosmos

First, in my mind the very universe is a combination of the two realms of today. The new heavens would not be like ours now. And what is meant in the scriptures of “heavens” anyway? Well, we know that in context the word for heaven or heavens can be one of three things:

- Earth's atmosphere (1st heaven)
- Outer space (2nd heaven)
- The Spirit Realm (3rd heaven)

I'll not show examples. You can look them up on your own. But we can see the same word used for all three.

Paul said that he was taken up into the “third heaven”, which I call the spirit realm. That is what most people generically call “heaven”. But the spirit realm is also where hell is now. And the Lake of Fire is there now too, to be carried over to the new creation just as we are to be carried over.

With that put out there, since the current “heaven” is to be no more, and since wherever Jesus is enthroned is heaven, and His throne is on the New Earth, we can

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surmise that the New Earth is where the new heaven will be. And the new heaven is the New Jerusalem.

And notice that such an arrangement has no separation between realms like now. Heaven is on a planet in a cosmos. That tells me that there is only one realm in the new creation. And this fits with my view of humanity as well.

Resurrection

I'll not go too deep into this, because it is covered more in Chapter Four. But for right now, I'll just say that humans will continue to be the three-part beings we are now. You're a soul, with a spirit, living in a body.

You see, now when we die, our soul and spirit continue to live-on apart from our physical body. They go to the spirit realm, where we are called "disembodied" souls. The body remains here, while the soul departs with the spirit accompanying it. In this notion, the spirit is the senses for the soul. Where the soul goes, the spirit goes to provide input to the soul. It's just like our physical five senses for our body's brain. Any conflation of spirit and soul is forgivable since they are inseparable.

The resurrection can then be seen as a reunion of the physical with the spiritual. New bodies for the old souls. And since souls don't age, we become young again forever.

For those saved by faith—called saints, this new body is on a whole new level of capacity. I call it "Humanity 2.0". We will be very much like Jesus in those

bodies. Indestructible. Perfect. Sinless. Capable of great things that seem miraculous now. That body is like a “mansion” compared to our current “tent”. See Paul’s 2nd letter to the Corinthians for that analogy (chapter 5).

And since I’m not getting into the other people yet (those not saved by faith in Christ), I’ll just say that they will be reintegrated as well. Just not on the same level.

But what I *will* share about them is this. They are mortals, living long lives and raising children on a utopian world, where their God is visible with His Spirit upon them. He is known to them and answers their prayers as they speak. There are no invisible demonic enemies to torment them and no marauding hordes to invade. But they do have the ability to sin. Although everything in that life is counterproductive to anything evil. (See Isaiah 65:17-25 for a more complete description.)

Conclusion

While much of what I just shared is not easily caught while reading the Bible, it is assembled from the scriptures. I just take what the Bible says, believe it, and change nothing to fit any preconceptions I might have. I do not follow any outside teaching at all.

Our “heaven” is not some ethereal void in some unknowable cosmos. It is a real earth in a real universe. And it is no longer a place of separate realms. It is perfect, with perfect people leading not-so-perfect people through life. Beautiful, serene, and joyful. God and man together forever. Amen.

Group Discussion and Reflection

Questions

1. What is the new heaven called?
2. Where is the new heaven located?
3. What is the shape of heaven's holy city?
4. What is the city and foundation made of?
5. Are there two kinds of people on the New Earth?

Answers

1. New Jerusalem
2. On New Earth
3. A perfect cube
4. Crystal walls, golden buildings and streets, gemstone foundation.
5. Yes. Immortal saints and mortal nations.

Chapter Four:

Eternal Mortal Life

Now that you have a fresh view of the plans God has for His people, we need to really understand who His people actually are.

The title of this chapter speaks to a notion that is not really discussed elsewhere. I've looked and haven't found it. I mean, other than in my own works, like *Sheep To Nations*, which covers it more deeply than this book will. My previous book, *The Hope That Is In Me* also discusses it, though not as deeply.

In *Sheep To Nations*, my doctrine on two kinds of humanity after the glorification of the saints is explored. In it, we read of the separation of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31-46. We see that the saints have already been glorified and are united with Christ in His glory.

Knowing that the saints are glorified at the time of the separation of the two groups of apocalypse survivors, we see that they are divided according to their behavior.

Here, I'll discuss the part about the sheep. I'll talk about the goats in the next chapter.

The First Judgment

Matthew 25:31-33 — ³¹ *When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from*

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another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

Right away, you might have noticed that we are not looking at the final judgment from Chapter Three. This is an earlier judgment from 1,000 years before that.

This judgment is at the beginning of the Millennium whereas the final judgment is right after the Millennium ends. This judgment decides who gets to stay on this earth for that thousand years, while the final judgment decides who gets to go to the New Earth.

Matthew 25:³⁴ *Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'*

³⁷ *Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?'*

⁴⁰ *And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'*

Chapter Four: Eternal Mortal Life

Try to see that there are two groups being discussed here: “*whatever **you** did for ... these **brothers** of mine.*” And remember, the King has **subjects** (the “you” here) and **family** (the “brothers” here). Those are two separate groups of people. This is highly important going forward. Family is made of adopted saints (sons of God; Brothers of Jesus). The subjects are the others who are allowed to remain, who are decent enough through works (like religion). Saints are by faith, while sheep/nations are by works.

Some of the ones in this judgment will still be alive on into the new creation. How do they live that long? Easy. Let’s jump over to Ezekiel and see a detail in his treatment of the Millennium that many seem to skip past.

The Water and Tree of Life

The Water of Life is a natural element with supernatural effects on life. Whether in the Millennial Temple or the New Jerusalem, this water comes from under the throne of Christ. It is what sustains lifeforms of all kinds wherever it flows or is consumed.

In the book of Ezekiel we read about it coming out of the temple complex and flowing down to the Dead Sea. As you read the account, see how it begins as a trickle then magnifies as it grows to a river that is over the head.

Ezekiel 47:1-12 — *Then the man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.*

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Next he brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and there I saw the water trickling out from the south side.

As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and led me through ankle-deep water. Then he measured off a thousand cubits and led me through knee-deep water. Again he measured a thousand cubits and led me through waist-deep water.

Once again he measured off a thousand cubits, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough for swimming—a river that could not be crossed on foot.

“Son of man, do you see this?” he asked. Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

When I arrived, I saw a great number of trees along both banks of the river. And he said to me, “This water flows out to the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah. When it empties into the Dead Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Wherever the river flows, there will be swarms of living creatures and a great number of fish, because it flows there and makes the waters fresh; so wherever the river flows, everything will flourish.

Fishermen will stand by the shore; from En-gedi to En-eghlaim they will spread their nets to catch fish of many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea.

But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

Chapter Four: Eternal Mortal Life

*“Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of all kinds will grow. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. Each month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will be used for food **and their leaves for healing.**”*

That’s the millennial River of Life. See how it grows as it goes? It just gets deeper and deeper as it goes.

Did you notice how it brings life wherever it flows? It turns salt water to fresh, bringing life to the previously salty Dead Sea. On the far end of the Dead Sea from where it enters, the marshes remain brackish—to give salt.

And notice how the trees are described. Every month they fruit afresh. And their leaves are used for healing. This is just like the Tree of Life seen in the New Jerusalem. The holy city has the River of Life too.

Now compare that river and those trees with what is in New Jerusalem. Here’s John’s testimony about that:

Revelation 22:1-2 — *Then the angel showed me a river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the main street of the city. **On either side of the river stood a tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit and yielding a fresh crop for each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.***

The parallels are there: river emerging from the throne; trees along the river bearing fruit each month with leaves used for healing.

Why the healing? I mean, if everyone in heaven is a saint, as many teach, why would a perfect, sinless, indestructible saint need healing? Answer: the saints do not need it. The trees and water are not for them. The elements of life are for the nations—those mortals who need them for continued life regeneration indefinitely. They are the sheep from the judgments who are allowed to live in His kingdom forever. This chapter is about them.

Eternal Mortal Life?

Isn't this term an oxymoron? Whoever heard of mortals living forever? "That makes no sense!" you might cry. If this is you, hold that thought. There is a simple explanation. And yeah, it's an oxymoron. Fun, huh?

(In the next chapter, we'll look at what the second death really is.)

It isn't that the people own their lives like the saints do. They do not. You see, Paul tells us that the saints inherit eternal life upon glorification. These people do not. In fact, when we read the Bible, we need to keep these distinctions in mind and be careful how we read. Here is Paul on the saints:

Titus 3:4-7 — *When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, **not because of the righteous things we had done**, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of*

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*his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will **inherit eternal life**.*

These who inherit their lives are not the sheep of Matthew 25. Those sheep were judged—while saints are not—according to things they had done, which these clearly are not. These are given grace based on their faith. Here, Paul only mentions mercy, but many other times he says it is by faith that we are saved. Not so, for the sheep.

When someone inherits something, it is theirs to have and keep. They own it. This is why I say that they inherit their lives forever. No one can or will ever take it.

But that is not said about the sheep who become the nations in the New Earth. They get to inherit the kingdom, not their lives. They inherit citizenship. That is a very different thing. In Matthew 25:34 above we read this: *“inherit the kingdom prepared for you”*. That was told to the sheep. Sheep inherit citizenship; saints inherit life.

Now, are the sheep of Matthew 25 the same as the ones in the Final Judgment? Not the very same people, no. But there is no difference between them. No doubt, those descendants of the sheep who were judged did not get judged with the sheep because that judgment was before their birth. So then, they are some of the ones who are judged in the Final Judgment a thousand years later. They must be judged, because some of their cousins took part in the final rebellion. And if some of their generation were rebellious, then all of that generation must be judged. I highly doubt that a sheep who was judged at the beginning

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of the Millennium would participate in that rebellion. Possible? Sure. Likely? Not so much.

And who else is judged in the final judgment? The text tells us in Revelation 20. It shows who are raised from the dead to face judgment.

Revelation 20:11-13 — *Then I saw a great white throne and the One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne.*

And books were opened, and one of them was the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their deeds, as recorded in the books. The sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead, and each one was judged according to his deeds.

Where are people who are in “death”? The spirit realm. Are they in hell, necessarily? No. The Greek for Hades is used for all people who are dead. Not just those in hell. Hades does not mean hell only. It can mean hell but not necessarily. It could be used for those in the spirit realm who did not go to hell but were not saved saints either.

If this is confusing, it is only because the word has been misused for so long.

Also, who can say with certainty that those who do go to hell are not judged to be allowed to live on the New Earth? Is there a clear passage that explicitly disallows repentance in hell? After over a thousand years of solitary confinement — thinking of nothing but your mistakes and

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poor behavior or judgment — is it impossible for you to have repented? Why or why not?

Is the Final Judgment a kangaroo court where the outcome is predetermined? Is that justice? And how many times did Jesus run home the idea that when a person repents they are to be forgiven? Many times. This is why I have a hope that those in hell will have an opportunity to show repentance to Jesus and confess He is Lord. If not, off to the Lake of Fire. Bend the knee and confess with the tongue—or else.

The Lamb's Book of Life is an interesting thing. It says that their names must be in the book, but it says nothing of why their names are or are not found in it (other than due to their deeds recorded in other books—perhaps). So why would we presume anything about it? Why do we assume that those in hell go straight to the Lake of Fire? I don't see that as being a very righteous thing to occur. I'd think that an actual hearing would be in order. A chance for them to confess sin and confess that Christ is Lord over them. I mean, if it doesn't work out, the Lake of Fire will still be available to them. It isn't going anywhere (other than into the new creation).

And aren't the saints pardoned of many of the very same sins and given the nature of Christ, based on their repentance and confession of faith? Fairness is a hallmark of God's judgments.

This is why I have hope that some in hell will be pardoned and allowed access into the New Earth. Every tongue will confess Christ as Lord. If not, it's rebellion.

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This line of thinking leads me to think that many are in the spirit realm who are neither in the presence of Christ, nor in hell. They are like the sheep, who neither had faith nor horrible behavior. So they are likely there and likely in this Final Judgment.

In the next chapter, I will discuss those who do go to the Lake of Fire. But I will tell you that I hope for them too (some of them, anyway).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there are people in the Millennium and the New Earth who are not saints, saved by faith, and they are not in the place of torment either. They are the ones whom Isaiah wrote of in his 65th chapter. They are the sheep who are in the nations of God's kingdom.

After all, the saints are ruling over someone, aren't they? Yes. And they aren't taking turns ruling over each other (with an iron rod—Rev. 2:27). Someone has to rebel at the end of the Millennium. And someone has to sin enough in Isaiah 65 to go to punishment.

Do you see how this is working out? Can you see the coherence of it? It all fits together without any systemic Band-Aids of seminary theology trying to patch bad ideas. These things may not all be explicit in the scriptures, but they are not against the scriptures either. And they do solve huge problems with the mainstream's ideology and end times theology. In the next, final chapter, the really big one is going to be examined. The one that is pure dogma in the Church's books. And which goes against the Bible's clear

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teaching of Who God really is. I mean, how can we see Jesus talking forgiveness, repentance, and love through the whole Bible then see a complete turnaround at the end. To me, that's a really bad kind of whiplash.

I don't know about you, but I've quietly wondered about it for a while now. And though it isn't exactly made clear in plain words, it can be picked from the words that are there. I hope you'll join me in learning about the possibility of God's Second Death Mercy.

Questions and Reflection

Questions

1. How do mortals live-on indefinitely (forever) ?
2. Where do the mortals live: in the city or out?
3. When do the first mortals get judged?
4. How are mortals judged, by faith or deeds?
5. Whom do the saints rule over?

Answers

1. By drinking and eating the elements of life.
2. Outside the city, but they go in regularly to worship and receive the elements of life.
3. At the beginning of the Millennium. The separation of the sheep and goats.
4. According to their behavior/deeds toward the saints (and possibly others).
5. The nations.

Chapter Five:

Second Death Mercy

Time to bring this all home. In this important chapter, I'm going to show you how to collect all of the Bible's teachings into a cohesive whole that shows us the heart of God and our own need. And it is our need, not God's. We are dependent upon Him; not Him upon us. We cannot continue to exist apart from Him and His presence. And since we do not cease to exist, we need His constant providence.

All of scripture, in one way or another, points us to a teaching about the crucifixion of God in human flesh. The goal of that event, as well as all others, is the redemption of the soul through the flesh of mankind.

Why do humans have flesh in the first place? Angels don't seem to have it. Is it not for the purpose of redemption through the flesh bearing the sin in order to save the soul?

We look upon death and suffering of the flesh as a curse—something horrible. And while it is that, there is another element about it that is the greatest blessing that mankind has. Angels don't have that blessing; only we do.

In this creation, at this time, death is the separation of the soul/spirit from the flesh. Why? Is it not to save the soul while the flesh falls away? Angels were not given such a device. It's like a protective covering that shields the part within. Strip away the coating and hopefully the contents are kept safe.

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But this is not always the case. Sometimes the innards are still affected through or by the cover. Like a banana's fruit still bruised through the peel. Perhaps the skin can absorb only so much. Dunno.

As humans, we see only the physical with our physical eyes. "Having eyes to see" is a spiritual thing. And for some of us, we have those spiritual "eyes to see". We see that death is a great blessing because through it we can be reconciled to our Creator, Whom we must be joined to.

He is jealous for our souls that He placed within us. I think it is because He put a little bit of Himself in Adam. And just as the Water of Life grows as it goes down its course, the life that He placed in Adam has been growing through all of his progeny. He truly desires to reunite with that spark, that seed He planted in humanity. That is the part of us that He really loves. It is the innermost part that is the most like Him. He has no real connection to matter; only the spirit that lives inside it.

So matter becomes something that is in the way. Something that must be dealt with. But for us, it seems to be everything. We only see the bloody corpse. We do not see the freed soul ascending from it. We are focused on the wrong thing! We always have been.

When you look at all the death in humanity, and recoil, it is because God gave you the ability to have disgust for the destruction of His creation. That is good. But when you fail to see the reason for the death, you are falling away from His purpose for that death.

Chapter Five: Second Death Mercy

I am trying to show you that reality in this book. I am trying to help you open those spiritual eyes to see the heart of God and the reason for suffering in our flesh.

No one (arguably) suffered greater than God in human flesh on a cruel cross. His flesh was beaten, torn, and broken to a disgusting degree. Just the lashing by two Roman soldiers with devices that rip as they bruise is more than most people could bear (indeed, that alone would have killed Him slowly). And then He was pierced by spikes and His dead flesh was pierced by a spear to prove the death. He likely still bears those scars in His perfect flesh as a reminder of our depravity that had to be dealt with.

So, humans introduced error into their code. Their flesh bore that consequence and it has been passed on to every generation since. The response of God to that event was mercy, dressed up in a curse. Irony is not something He shies away from.

But that blessing lives on in us. Death—the current death—is separation from our depraved flesh. That is what we can call the “first death”. Separation for the sake of the soul within. Death to the flesh for life to the soul/spirit.

What Is The Second Death?

The Bible did not make all of this plain and clear to us. And we have all (collectively) turned death into such a horrible thing that we go so far as to curse the God Who blessed us with the very thing we are cursing Him over. That is true irony. I guess God meets irony with irony. Fitting.

Their Worm Does Not Die

In Revelation, we are met with a thing called a “second death”. Many, perhaps the great majority by far, have taken that to mean that it is termination of either the life force within or the inability for redemption of that life force. We have seen it as an extension of the first death. Ratcheting it up, so to speak.

But I am now showing you another way. I say that the second death is a merger of what was severed. The first death separates soul from body. But the second death is where they remain together in the unity of the resurrection. But it is still “death”. Death to what? Death to the life that He designed for us, which is unification with Him.

And this is where those who were called “goats” were relegated. They went directly to the second death from His first judgment. They did not get the opportunity to sit and think about it in hell (a temporary “time out”).

Matthew 25:41-46 — *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. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me.’*

And they too will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’

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Then the King will answer, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.'

And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

We might see this as just straight-up punishment, with punishment as the goal. But I do not see it that way any longer. I see all punishment as a means to an end. The end is reconciliation, redemption, reunification, or restoration.

God told fathers to not spare the rod with their children. Was it for some sick sadist pleasure for the father or masochistic pleasure for the child? Hardly. It was for correction. And even the correction was not the goal. Redemption was the goal. Restoration to unity was the goal. This is the heart of God.

So when we look to the separation that is in the second death, do we see separation as the goal? Or do we see reunification as the ultimate goal?

It has been said (forcefully) that since God is eternal His punishment must be as well. I say that is ignorance dressed in arrogance. It is a deep cruelty that is not due the Father of life, Who is Love in its fullest form.

Either we accept Father as a Being of purity and love or we do not. Where are the gradients in that? There is no middle ground. Either God is good or He is corrupt. And applying that same logic to us (who are made in His image) we can see the futility in trying to grade our own depravity.

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Indeed, Isaiah's verse (64:6) tells us that there is no gradient. What we see as righteousness coming from tainted flesh is simply disgusting to Him Who knows true purity. And when we attempt to apply some measure of gradient to our depravity it becomes silly to such a One as Him.

But while the taint is a stain, regardless of amount, the method for removing it may very well have variation in intensity. For some, a simple warning may suffice (through fear or grace). For others, a thousand years in solitary confinement might do the trick (hell). For others, a fiery cleansing is the thing (Lake of Fire). We will get to the fire in a minute.

This leads us to gradients of cleansing solution, not gradients of grime. And the degree of cleansing seems to be connected to our reception of the cleansing. For those who can be cleansed simply by faith in the cleansing of the cross, that will do. For others, more intense methods may be required.

If I have something that is covered in some dirty thing that stains, the sooner I apply the cleansing method, the better. But if it sits for a while, the cleansing may be more difficult or even impossible. Take some fruit juices for example. Wash it out of the cloth instantly and you might have a chance. Let it dry and it might be hopeless. No matter the amount of coverage, it is the application that matters. Some things come out immediately if a mild solution is applied regardless of the size of the stain. If left untreated, the treatment will need to be more concentrated.

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The second death is like a pressure washer instead of a garden hose. The goal is cleansing. The method is the method that works.

Refining fire is a theme that comes up from time to time in scripture. One is when Isaiah's lips are touched with a coal to refine his speech, not destroy his lips. Another is Malachi 3, where the Lord Himself is shown to be using fire for exactly what I am claiming—refining us into a better condition. Then the Lake of Fire is there in a few places. Intensity is the key element to the fire. How much is required for the thing (person) being refined? A little for Isaiah? More for the nation of Israel? A lot for many in the LoF? That is God's call. He is the Master Refiner.

The Fourth Option (SDM)

In the body of believers, called the Church, the believers, and a dozen other terms, a few theories, called doctrines have evolved over time. There are three main ideas that pertain to this thing we call second death. I am offering a fourth.

Eternal Torment

The main idea is referred to as Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT). It says that because God is eternal, His punishment is too. It means what it says: the punishment is eternal, while the punished are conscious of it, and it is tormenting for them without mercy. This isn't just the main idea, it's overwhelmingly accepted.

This thought removes God's mercy from that scenario.

Annihilation

Others, fewer but still quite many, say that God is not that cruel. To which I would agree. But they make an error in thinking that God's creatures are not everlasting from their creation. But it also quickly removes the logic of putting anyone in that Lake of Fire. I mean, if it destroys them instantly, what's the point of an eternal place for it? Why not just wave the holy hand and obliterate them?

This one does not recognize God's eternal creation. And it becomes silly immediately.

Universal Salvation

Still another option, possibly growing in popularity these days, is that the cross is sufficient for all people and they do not need to accept it for it to be effective. It says, no matter what, God will not punish you.

This might seem like a really nice option on the face of it, but it denies God's righteousness, which demands justice. It also denies the sovereignty of man, that God has given to us. Not to mention it is highly dangerous in light of reality which disagrees with it entirely. It's like taking poison and denying its harmful effects. It is complete ignorance of God's full Word to us about Him and us. Perhaps it is willful ignorance at that.

SDM—Second Death Mercy

My fourth option for you, SDM, takes all of the good elements of all three and cuts away the bad elements.

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Want God to be serious about sin and suffering?
Want to acknowledge that He uses physical suffering to
apply spiritual healing? [check] Want God to **not** be so
harsh (or evil) that He delights in eternal punishment for
punishment's sake? [check] Want the cross of Christ to
apply to all, regardless of the offense? [check]

I am offering you a biblical alternative to all three
of these doctrines, which each has a fatal flaw.

I allow God to be sovereign and just and willing to
punish sin. I am allowing Him to not be a horrible ogre
Who delights in causing pain. And I know that the cross is
sufficient for all who will merely accept it and do so with
thanksgiving. Allowing it to transform them from evil to
good (in the end).

How is this biblical, when so many passages of
scripture show an eternal punishment? That is a question
that requires careful examination. And we will do that to a
degree. It is not so cut-and-dried and clearly shown. Plus,
early translations, into Latin, are the culprit. Match this
with losing the continuity of God's Word and the recipe is
set. Hang in there for just a bit more and we will see it.

Take Paul's words to the Thessalonians: *"They will
suffer the penalty of eternal destruction, separated from the
presence of the Lord and the glory of His might."* (2
Thessalonians 1:9)

That sounds final. But look at the Greek underneath
it. *Olethros* — rendered "destruction" — is defined by
Strong's as ruin, loss, punishment. Not annihilation. Not
torment. The loss of all that gives worth to existence.

And *aionios*, as already shown in this study, describes the quality and permanence of a place — not necessarily the duration of every occupant's stay within it. The penalty is separation from His presence. That is the ruin described. The place is eternal. That every soul assigned to it remains there without recourse is assumed by the reader, but not the explicit teaching of the text.

Where Is The Lake Of Fire?

Let's take a breather for a minute and look at an easier thing to see: the location of the Lake of Fire (LoF).

We know that it exists in this time—this creation. How? Because of the timing of its use. If we go to the book of Revelation, we see one use of it before the end of this creation. And if we go to Matthew 25, we see another. In fact, we already looked at the “goats” being sent there at the very beginning of the Millennium.

In Revelation, we see it being used even before then, upon the antichrist and his false prophet. In Revelation 19:20, we read this:

But the beast was captured along with the false prophet, who on its behalf had performed signs deceiving those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. Both the beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

This happens just before the separation of the sheep and goats, which is after the battle of Armageddon. I assume that the army that was with them also went there.

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All of these souls went to the LoF prior to the Final Judgment, which is after the Millennium.

So it exists in this time. In this creation. It is not strictly part of the new creation. But it is in the new creation as well. Just as we are in both. It gets carried over, inhabitants and all.

But can we determine where in the new creation it sits? I think we can. Let's go back to Isaiah.

Isaiah 66:23-24 — *From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come to worship before Me," says the LORD.*

"As they go forth, they will see the corpses of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their worm will never die, their fire will never be quenched, and they will be a horror to all mankind."

This is in the new creation, on the New Earth, outside the New Jerusalem. In fact, it is directly in view of those who enter and leave (go forth) to and from the holy city (regularly). Those who are going forth (to and fro) are not the saints. They are the nations. Those sheep or their descendants who must go up to see their God on His glorious throne to worship Him. While there, they eat the fruit of life and drink the water of life. If anyone is sick, they can use the leaves for a tea, a poultice, or other remedy.

Now, we need to unpack that passage because there is a serious but subtle error in it. It is in these words: *"have rebelled"*. Even if you use a concordance to look it up, you

will still see that rendering. That is unfortunate, because the grammar tells a different story. In the Hebrew, the actual meaning is **ongoing**: “are rebelling”. So it should really say (if being faithful to the text), “*they will see the dead bodies of the men who **are rebelling** against Me*”

What Is Their Worm and Why Doesn't It Die?

A few comments are in order here.

Dead bodies (corpses) — this is actually referring to the bodies that are in the state of the second death, upon resurrection, which is a unification of the body and the soul. We are not merely looking at what you and I would call a corpse, which today is separate from its life force. We are looking at living bodies in a place called the second death. The LoF actually sustains the flesh in a state of eternal suspended animation. It keeps them alive forever. That is the horror of it for us. But I say this is being used as a device by the Creator to bring them into a place of surrender to Him. Reconciliation, not punishment is the goal. However long that might take. I'm sure it will vary between souls.

Their worm — This is a funny way of referring to the very same thing: the flesh that they inhabit. **Their worm**. Their body. Which does not lose its life force. It wriggles and writhes for the full time it takes for them to repent of their rebellion. Every tongue must confess that Jesus is Lord. If it takes a very long time for that to happen, so be it. But I keep saying that the goal is unification with God, which is necessary for true life to remain.

Their fire — This is more akin to saying their world or their nation or their place. It is referring to something that doesn't really belong to them as in they own it and they hold the deed. It is more that they are relegated to it and it is their place for the duration. This means that the place of fire does not go away. It does not need to mean that their placement in that eternal place must be eternal. This too is important. It allows the place with its smoke to be there, with the smoke rising forever and ever in the eternal sense. It does not mean that their own torment must be for eternity (with the exception of Satan and the beasts).

And consider this. Many who are there could have been caught up in lies in the heat of the moment in their short lives on this planet. All who take the Mark of the Beast, for example, will have to spend time in the LoF. But that could be due to a rash decision, possibly made under false pretenses or even under duress (being forced to do it).

Would a righteous God commit someone under those circumstances to a trillion, billion millennia of torment for one horrible choice? Not in my Book. Would He put them there for correction for a time? Yes, I'll agree to that. And amen.

The LoF is a place that lasts forever (eternally) without those in it needing to stay any longer than is necessary. This does not violate scripture. It clarifies it.

Rebellion and Repentance

So, let's dig in just a bit more. I see the rebellion as something that must be punished. But I see God's will as

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being to reconcile with His creatures. His heart wants unity as long as that is possible. But aren't all things possible with God? Yes and no. Yes He can make it happen, but only if we agree. This goes back to the beginning. Love is only valuable when it is freely given. Likewise, repentance is only workable if it is true and freely made.

This is the equation then: The one in the worm suit must repent. That is on their timing and according to their God-given will. Then the Creator/Judge will forgive them according to His sovereign will and judgment. Both must be true at once. First the repentance, then the mercy.

Isaiah told of those in worm suits who are in a state of active rebellion. My assertion is that when that rebellion ceases, the Lord is then free to wave His mercy over them. That is His choice to make at that time. It is His call. He is God. It's His right, as the One Who created that one in the worm suit and placed him into the LoF.

God's Mercy, God's Will

For those who do not like the idea of a sovereign God Who has the right and power to judge His creatures, the problem is yours to solve. You cannot simply declare God to be evil for having the right to exercise His judgment on evil (truly evil) humans or angels. You are not that wise. You are not that good. You are not perfect in your ways as He is perfect in His. You only know what you think you know. He knows all, fully and perfectly. You can only speak from a single point of view with limited vision. He sees it all. He does not need the facts shown to Him; they are His from the beginning.

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If you recoil at the thought of torture, pain, or misery, then you are operating in the very limits and understanding He placed in you. But His understanding and rules are not what He gave to you. He has told us this.

Isaiah 55:8-11 — *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.*

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return without watering the earth, making it bud and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My word that proceeds from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it.”

And what pleases Him? Mercy. Love. Joy. Faith. All things that are good. If He knows us better than we know ourselves, then our willful ignorance couched in arrogance is not going to serve us well.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but ends in death. (Proverbs 14:12, paraphrase)

That death can come from two directions, since each path has two ways to go. Same path, same end, two ways. One way is not paying attention to the “foolishness” of God. You quickly judge the Judge. The other way is thinking that you are fine the way you are. You think you are too good to fail or be judged.

This is found in the ways of man through two means: Atheism or Religion. One says there is nothing to gain or fear. The other says that there is gain found in their own works. Both are wrong. Both are found in ignorance of God's true nature and intent for us, His creatures.

Conclusion

This is likely a lot for you to take in. The more entrenched you have become in one path or the other, the more difficult it might be for you to reconcile with it or get out of that rut.

But look carefully at what I am presenting here. I am not rewriting God's word. I am not imposing my will onto it. I am working diligently to take it as it was first given to us through the original texts and their intent.

I am allowing the God of the Bible to be sovereign, caring, and having a desire for reconciliation, which is one of the most hard-driven points of the Book in total. What I am not doing is allowing early men to color the text with their own opinions. Especially if based on the wrong grammar or translation into Latin.

He wants us to reconcile with Him. He does not desire that any should perish but that all come to eternal life. That means as either a mortal sheep in the nations, or an immortal saint in His family.

The King wants to adopt you into His family, not merely have you be one of His subjects in the realm. But if you refuse, He has a way to try to convince you. And He will not simply give up the effort. He is not a quitter. He is

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not afraid of your opinions of Him. He will do what He knows is right. He does not let you merely fall away forever. Only you can send yourself to hell. Only you can continue your rebellion in the Lake of Fire — His final solution.

Religion is for the subjects of the King. Faith is for His adopted sons and daughters. And being an adopted child is just as good as being His only begotten Son (in a way). He loves you every bit as much as He does Jesus, when you come to Him in the faith that Jesus provides.

I ask you to reconsider your opinions of God. See that He is loving to the point of Being Love. Also see that He is righteous to the point of doing whatever must be done to reconcile with you through your rebellion. Including taking your pain for you. That is what He did on that cruel, disgusting cross. He put the enemy's defeat on full display, naked before the world. Where we see a perfect, naked man defeated by evil, He sees evil defeated by a perfect Man.

Look for the Way. Look for the Truth. Look for the Life. They are right there on that cross. That is the better way. But there is another, lesser way through the mercy of Him Who was pinned to that cross, even if you don't see it.

Faith itself is a gift from the Father of that Son. Ask Him for it and turn from your wickedness as best you can. The turning will not save you, for it is in your very DNA. But the belief that His flesh and blood covers your sinful soul is the Way. It is enough. His grace is sufficient for you. Or at least acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, as you take a knee before Him.

I leave you with Isaiah 55

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost!

Why spend money on that which is not bread, and your labor on that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of foods. Incline your ear and come to Me; listen, so that your soul may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant—My loving devotion promised to David. Behold, I have made him a witness to the nations, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you will run to you. For the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, has bestowed glory on you.

“Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” *declares the LORD*.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return without watering the earth, making it bud and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My

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word that proceeds from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it. You will indeed go out with joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush, the cypress will grow, and instead of the brier, the myrtle will spring up; this will make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign, never to be destroyed.”

In Him and His love, while for you and not against you,

Gary

Questions and Reflection

Questions

1. Can the place be eternal and the occupants be eternal, while their stay there is not?
2. Is God so loving that we even declare Him to be Love?
3. Are you judging the Judge?
4. Do you really want suffering to be eternal, which is far beyond trillions of billions of millennia?
5. Did you faithfully dig into the Word in its original languages before making up your mind? Or are you taking someone else's word for it and basing your judgment on that?

Your answers are your own this time. I do not judge you. You judge yourself.

Other books by Gary

The Complete Gospel: a blending of the four Gospels into one continuous, flowing story.

Rules for Life, according to Jesus

The Broken Planet Model

This Broken Planet

End Times Made Easy

Sheep To Nations

The Hope That Is In Me

All books are available in their entirety for free on his website: GaryTheGospelGuy.com.

If you want a hard copy, you can either print your own as a PDF from the website or go to Amazon, where paperbacks, eBooks, and audiobooks are available for a modest price.

Tracts are also available for some titles.

His blog might have some interest for you as well. That is on the same site.

Be blessed as you seek God's face and Will.