

## Heaven in the Real World - Part 6

*"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 5:1 NKJV)*

### *If There is a Heaven, There is a Hell*

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When we're talking about Hell, there's a lot of opinions out there, and the dangerous thing about opinions is that Truth is not contingent on what we believe. We can say, *"Well, I don't believe that,"* and then put our own designer faith together, selectively taking a little bit from different religious teachings, but the problem with that is God has given us clarity in his Word, and if we don't base what we believe on his Word, we're in trouble from the git-go. There's a true North that we need to be able to say that no matter what's going on or what I happen to believe in at this moment, there is a true North, and I need to get into alignment with that, whether I like it or I believe it or not.

Would the God that we're told is loving send people to a place like Hell? We've all had our questions along the way, or else we've come to a point in our lives where we don't even think about it anymore. The thing is, if there's a heaven and there's a good God, then it stands to reason that there's a real hell and a real devil. Two things the Church doesn't talk much about are Heaven, and even more so, Hell.

*"There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than the doctrine of hell, if it lay in my power, but it has the support of Scripture and, especially, of our Lord's own words; it has always been held by the Christian Church, and it has the support of reason."*  
(quote by C.S. Lewis)

Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV

*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

These are sobering words. Most people don't even think about the doctrine (teaching and theology) of Hell. We all love to live "up in a down world", however, there is a reality that we need to address - not to scare us to Heaven, but to make us aware of our responsibility to say simply that we love people so much that we don't want any of them to go to Hell.

*That's* why it needs to come into view for us, not to worry or be afraid that every single sin we commit will erase our salvation, or require that we get saved all over again, but the whole point of Hell, for us who believe, is to motivate us to say, *"I don't want anyone to perish!"* Scripture says that God is not willing that any should perish. Sad to say, though, some *will* if they don't believe and receive the free gift of eternal life that's in Jesus Christ. It's a reality we need to hold out here, not as the thing that's *always* on our minds - we fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith - but we need to hold in view a theology and a doctrine of Hell.

## **Hell - Fact or Fiction?**

It's not fiction... it's fact! The Bible refers to Hell directly 167 times as...

- Everlasting Destruction
- Everlasting Fire
- Everlasting Torment
- Lake of Fire
- Hell

Jesus talked more about hell than he did Heaven. That should get our attention. Jesus referenced "Hell" directly thirty three times! Hell is not Hollywood. It's not a spooky Halloween icon. It's not a fairy tale. It's not a Greek Myth... *it is a reality.*

There are people in your friendship and family orbits that don't know Jesus Christ as Savior, and if they *don't* choose Jesus Christ and the free gift of eternal life, and repent of their sin and receive that gift, they *will* go to Hell. That will be their destiny. It's important that we get an understanding so we can be active and participate - *co-operate* with Jesus - *co-labor* with the Holy Spirit - so we can help, assist, and lead people to the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

This must be the most horrible *true story - event - account* that Jesus ever told - about a *certain* rich man and a *certain* beggar named Lazarus:

Luke 16:19-31 NKJV

*"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

*"Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'*

*"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "*

Definition of Terms:

Hades (Greek) - The god of the underworld in Greek mythology. His name came to be synonymous with the place of the dead in Greek, so the Septuagint uses "Hades" almost exclusively to translate the Hebrew name for the underworld, *Sheol*. (The Lexham Glossary of Theology)

Sheol (Hebrew) - In Old Testament thought, the abode of the dead. Sheol is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek Hades, which means "the unseen world." (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary )

Gehenna (Greek: *Hell*) - A deep, narrow ravine west and south of Jerusalem. At the High Places of Baal in the Valley of Hinnom, parents sacrificed their children as a burnt offering to Molech (2 Kings 23:10). Ahaz and Manasseh, kings of Judah, were both guilty of this awful wickedness (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6).

The Valley of Hinnom was used as the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem. Refuse, waste materials, and dead animals were burned here. Fires continually smoldered, and smoke from the burning debris rose day and night. Hinnom thus became a graphic symbol of woe and judgment and of the place of eternal punishment called Hell.

Translated into Greek, the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom" becomes gehenna, which is used twelve times in the New Testament (eleven times by Jesus and once by James), each time translated as "hell". (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary )

In Hell, the rich man was no longer prideful *nor* rich, but he's broken and shattered - he's now the beggar - the script is flipped because of choices, and now it's too late. This is pre-crucifixion and pre-resurrection, but Romans 1:19-20 says:

*"But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse."* (the Message Bible)

Even before Christ came, people were without excuse because the heavens and all of creation still pointed to a Redeemer - Messiah - King - to God's attributes. Many people wonder about those who didn't know about Jesus because they lived in Africa and never heard the Gospel, but they did see the Gospel in Creation, and God *made* it known to them. That's not for us to judge God's ways of doing things, so we trust God, with his attributes clearly shown in Romans chapter one.

In reality, if it's *not* true, and we lived our lives for God, we've lost absolutely *nothing* - but if it *is* true, and we choose not to follow Christ, and not to live our lives for God - then we will have lost everything.

The rich man wanted Lazarus to go and testify - witness - to his family, because he didn't want them to be in Hell where *he* was. Hopefully, our take-away - whatever we come away believing and thinking about Heaven and Hell - that we'll at least have an uptick in our urgency to say, "I do care about my family. I do care about my friends, and the last thing I would want is for them to ever go to a place like that."

We may wonder, what if God did do something miraculous to convince them? But Scripture tells about the Israelites that were in the desert, how they saw water come from a rock, the Red Sea parted, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and they ate the manna that God gave them and He promised to provide more for them. They ate and enjoyed the quail. God provided miraculously and shortly afterwards they complained about all of it. They saw and experienced the miracles but were still not convinced.

We also will not take a step towards Jesus unless our hearts are *already* open - searching. If we're not already in a mode of saying, "*Yes, God,*" we can see every mode of miracle in the world thrown at us and we'll never repent - never turn and give our hearts to him. This just confirms that fact, that even if they saw one raised from the dead (a projection of Jesus being raised), they wouldn't be persuaded.

This is sobering. We can't talk about Heaven and get excited about that, till we actually discuss this as well - it takes both. There comes a point where we have to realize that Scripture got things right, and that demon spirits such as Molech are still alive and operative in our country - all the darkness that's going on right now - luring and sacrificing our children once again, and taking out the next generation as fast as they can.

This is also important, because if we don't believe it's true, we'll never have an urgency, like the rich man who was begging Abraham to send somebody to his family. Now, on *this* side of the resurrection, we have the Gospel - the Good News that Jesus came. He lived the life we should have lived, died the death we should have died, and he did that *in our place!* We have the Good News that three days after dying, he rose from the dead, proving that he was the Son of God - he was who he *said* he was.

This was all supported by both biblical and extra-biblical writers like Josephus and Tertullian, making it clear that Jesus rose from the dead just like he said he would, proving he's the Son of God. If you will trust him as Savior of your life and Lord of your life - give him the Lordship - where you relinquish control and say, *"I need a Savior. I need help,"* he will come in and take up residence in your life and take over.

That's why he's here, and the Kingdom of God supercedes all of this silliness that we get caught up in. We have to say, *"Yes, Lord. Yes, Jesus. It ain't working for me, and I need Your help - I need You."* Then, Jesus says, *"I've got Good News for you - not only will I save you for all eternity so that you get to be in Paradise - in Abraham's bosom - but you also have the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Who's going to walk with you here, and He's going to take up residence in you, to walk and talk with you and help you navigate the crazy in-between in which you live."*

We are stuck between Eden and Heaven. Let's get started - take the first step on a long journey - but we also want our friends and family to go as well... do we *know* that they know?

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus - Holy Spirit - Father, thank You for Your grace. Thank You for mercy. Thank You that You are teaching us from Your very Word - the reality that Hell is a real place - not a fantasy, a Hollywood movie, or a cartoon character - it's a very real place. Lord, not only do we not want to go there, but we also don't want our friends, family, and co-workers - the people that You've put in our paths and in our lives to go there.*

*Lord, help us learn what it means to live with Heaven in view - but also with the reality of having Hell in view, so we will be prompted, motivated, and inspired to preach the Gospel, and offer the invitation to Life without shame. Every group, political or otherwise, on this planet is offering something. We cannot be silent, and be the only ones who are keeping the Good News to ourselves. We ask You for Your grace and help. Be our Savior, Lord, and Master - be in control of our lives.*

*We submit to You. We say "Yes" to You. Give us clarity about the reality of Heaven and Hell. Lord, may it motivate and empower us - not out of fear, but out of love, that we may speak the Truth in love to our friends, family, and co-workers - the people in our orbits where we live, work, and play. We ask for Your grace to do that. Thank You for teaching us. We receive it and ask that we would not leave here sad, but rather thankful that we who are in Christ will never have to wonder about this - but we do have others You have given us who do, so give us grace to open our mouths and share the best news ever, that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior! We love and honor You. In Jesus' name. Amen*

Great video resource: [To Hell and back](#) by Maurice Rawlings, M.D. - on Youtube