

## Heaven in the Real World - Part 7

*"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 (Week 2 of 2)*

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When people give their opinions of Hell, many of them use the phrase, *"I think..."* a lot, instead of *"I know..."* Here's the beauty of it, as followers of Jesus - those of us who have stepped over the line and received Christ as our Savior and his free gift of eternal life - we can respond to the question of Heaven or Hell with the words *"I know... I know where I'm going. I'm going to Heaven. I'm going to dwell with Him forever. He has stuff for me to do there. I'll be busy doing the things he's asked me to - fulfilling his will and call."*

We can also say that we *know* who goes to Hell. God doesn't *send anyone* to Hell - he only gives us what we *choose*. Scripture is clear that Hell wasn't even created for humans, but for the devil and his angels. So, if someone goes to Hell, it's because they've chosen to reject Jesus Christ and the free gift of salvation that God has offered.

*"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). Truth is not contingent on what I believe, but on what the Bible says - the Word of God - inerrant - given to us for our "True North".

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."*

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 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 real*. We need to be aware of that, *not* so we can be scared or worried whether we're going there - because when we're in Christ, there is *no fear*. Perfect love - like we have in Christ - casts out all fear (of messing up and losing what we have).

We are not motivated out of fear. We're motivated out of love. *That* is our theological foundation of the doctrine of hell - to be motivated by it, to not want anyone in our orbit, including strangers on the street, where God opens a conversation through a divine appointment with someone who needs to hear the Gospel - the Good News of Jesus Christ. When we live "on mission", that will happen on a regular basis - we'll have opportunities to share. So, Hell doesn't cause us fear, but it *should* cause an urgency that rises in us because we don't want anyone to go there.

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.' "*

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 Kin. 23:10). Ahaz and Manasseh, kings of Judah, were both guilty of this awful wickedness (2 Chronicles. 28:3; 33:6).

While it is true that Hell is the separation from God and all things good, it is also true that it is a literal place that is based on the Word of God. We have to make up our minds, to believe what the Bible says, or rather to take only what we like from the Bible. We should choose to believe it, even if it's uncomfortable, inconvenient, awkward, or goes in line with our culture.

We choose to believe the Truth over the temporary. Facts are temporary and are subject to change. Truth is eternal and it never changes. That's why we camp out on Scripture that says Hell is a literal fire - a burning place like Gehenna, Tophet, or the Valley of Hinnom. Context is king, and 167 times Hell is referred to in this way. We need to understand that Hell is not going to be one big party where we're going to see our friends, and party for eternity together... THIS IS SERIOUS!!! AND IT'S FOREVER!!!

The Greek Word for "Torment" here has three meanings:

1] It refers to acute pain from a debilitating disease. (Believers in Christ will see an end to their pain when they die physically.)

2] It refers to a rack of torture.

3] It refers to an intense fire hot enough to melt gold. The New Testament describes hell as a place of fire (unquenchable, eternal, everlasting, furnace of, flame of, lake of fire). Jesus used the word "fire" to describe hell nineteen times because it is real and it should motivate us to do whatever we can to prevent anyone we know from going there.

## What Happens When a Person Goes to Hell?

1] They Desire Comfort - He asked for just the tip of his finger to be dipped in water! Jesus describes hell as a place of weeping and wailing. Hell was not made for people. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angles. Hell was prepared for Satan and his followers, not for man. It is the most awful punishment for Satan and fallen angels.

Matthew 25:41 NKJV

*"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels..."*

2] They Express Concern - He begs for someone to go and warn his family. Will there one day be relatives, friends, co-workers of ours that will cry out, *"Why didn't you warn me about this place?"* Satan has lulled the Church to sleep and convinced us not to think about or talk about hell. He gets us to make a joke out of hell and to minimize the danger of not accepting Jesus.

What would you do if your neighbor's house was on fire? You would spring into action - everything in you desperate to save them. You would run into that house where your neighbors are to rescue them. You would be compelled and driven to get them out of harm's way. That same adrenaline should cause an urgency that we have when it comes to our friends, families and co-workers - people we know and talk to in the check-out line at HEB or Walmart. There should be something in us that says, *"I just want to make sure that they know where they're going - that they've made the choice to follow Jesus."*

3] They Seek Consolation and Comfort - He believed that if some great miracle occurred, then those he knew and loved would believe, but in hell, there is no consolation, no comfort. He is told that if they won't hear the good news through Moses and the prophets, then they wouldn't even be persuaded if one rose from the dead. This is a direct reference to Jesus rising from the dead.

It has been said that one of the greatest enemies of the Church, and the advancement of the Kingdom of God in our time isn't the devil - it's distraction. We just get so bombarded with "life" that we don't even have any margin in our life to care for our neighbor to that extent. We need to be convinced that we are called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ - to share what we have in Jesus, so that our neighbor, friend, that house that's on fire - we are called to go into that house and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All week long, we will bump into people in our spheres of influence in the world, and they are like we were before we met Jesus - without direction or boundaries - with nothing to help them. Someone shared the Gospel with *us*, because they cared about us. Houses are burning all around us - will we go in? The bridge is out - cars are speeding toward the canyon. Will we just stand there and watch them drive off the cliff? Or, will we speak the Truth in love, like Ephesians 4:15 says? Share the Gospel - the Good News. Tell your story. God will touch your story and it will have power. Trust God to empower your story... to rescue others and tell them the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## **Prayer**

*Father, in Jesus' name, thank You that the Gospel - the Good News - is the power of God unto Salvation. Thank You that it is powerful and transformative for our lives. Lord, whatever our needs are today, would You meet them? Would You bless and encourage each one here? Lord, as we go out, we want to leave with our buckets full and running over, and wherever we go, to make beautiful messes, and to share our Gospel story with someone else. We give you honor and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen*