

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
HEAVEN AND HELL
PART 1

This morning we are going to begin a new section in our Foundation of Faith series. We are going to look at Heaven and Hell and what these places are about, are they real, who goes there and-so-on. The reason we are doing this is because there are many today who have some very strange ideas about Heaven and Hell and I think the Scriptures are clear. It should not be confusing. I believe that God has given to us all we need to know about these places and once we pass from this life to the next, depending on our relationship with Jesus, we will know what Heaven or Hell is all about.

This morning we are going to focus on Hell because when I finish up this study I want to end on a positive note, I want to end on the topic of Heaven because if you are in Christ, this is where you will be going! Now in regards to Hell, listen to what Ironside wrote,

On one occasion Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, the agnostic lecturer of the last century, was announced to give an address on hell. He declared he would prove conclusively that hell was a wild dream of some scheming theologians who invented it to terrify credulous people. As he was launching into his subject, a half-drunken man arose in the audience and exclaimed, "Make it strong, Bob. There's a lot of us poor fellows depending on you. If you are wrong, we are all lost. So be sure you prove it clear and plain."

No amount of reasoning can nullify God's sure Word. He has spoken as plainly of a hell for the finally impenitent [unrepentant] as of a heaven for those who are saved.

Make no mistake about it, Hell is a real place and we will discuss in a few minutes the various names that the Bible uses for this place called Hell. Also, it is important to note that Jesus spoke often of Hell, that it is a real place for those that have rejected Him. It is not a picture of this life being Hell as some like to teach, but a literal place of torment awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment when all unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness and we will discuss this also in a few minutes.

But first let me share some things with you about Hell and what it is not. Now please, I am not here to offend any of you or put you down in what I am about to say, but what I want you to see is how this person and their description of Hell is unbiblical, it is extra-biblical. That would mean that God forgot to tell us something and this is an addition to His Word. Let me show you what I mean and please, hear me out on this.

Some of you may have heard of this book and some of you may have even read it. This book, by Bill Weise is called "23 Minutes in Hell" and it is not a story of being stuck on the Illinois Toll Road! This is the story of Bill Weise who suddenly found himself hurtling through the air, falling to the ground and then landing completely naked in a prison cell of rough-hewn stone and thick metal bars. This event occurred on November 23, 1998 at 3:00 am and Weise said that instantly he felt this tremendous heat. In fact the heat was so intense that he could not believe that he was even alive!

There in the cell with him were two creatures that stood some ten to thirteen feet tall. They had a reptilian appearance but with a human form. They were scaly and foul-smelling and had foot-long claws, the strength of a thousand men. I am unsure how he knew that they had the strength of a thousand men, but he said he knew. And these creatures that were locked in the cell with him were seething with evil and hatred! Now, according to Bill, they spoke to one another in “terrible, blasphemous language. . . . expressing extreme hatred for God.”

These two demons were joined by two other demons and they turned upon Bill and started to torment him. Now if they were really that strong, like a thousand men, he would have been toast in a minute, but that did not happen. What they did do was pick him up and they threw him against the wall. They plunged their claws into his chest and ripped open his flesh! And he did not die!

Now even though his flesh was ripped open, no fluids came from his body but he was in tremendous pain and thirst and there was this feeling of absolute hopelessness! Bill even pleaded for mercy but there was no mercy shown him. He hoped for death but death seemed to elude him!

Somehow he managed to crawl out of the cell, away from these four powerful demons and as he crawled through this opened door he “heard the screams of an untold multitude of people crying in torment.” Not only that but he also saw “a gigantic raging inferno approximately one mile in diameter” and “many people reaching out of the pit of fire, desperately trying to claw their way out. But there was no escape” he wrote.

And if anyone tried to escape the powerful demons would prevent that from happening! During these 23 minutes in Hell Weise tells us that he found himself in this cave in which the walls were “covered with thousands of hideous creatures. These demonic creatures were all sizes and shapes. . . . There were also gigantic rats and huge spiders at least three feet wide and two or three feet high. I also saw snakes and worms, ranging from small to enormously large. I was petrified and could not believe my eyes.” It sounds incredible and it really is!

And then, after those 23 minutes in Hell Weise began to ascend in this burst of brilliant light that invaded this tunnel and he saw the face of Jesus who said, “I am” and the horror was over.

Now I am not amazed at this book for there are many books out there that speak of unbelievable things about God, unbiblical things about God and this is just another one of them. What amazes me is the number of Christians that believe it! Now before you get mad at me, let’s see if what the book says is Scriptural. Now you may say, “But maybe God showed him things that are not in the Bible to help us understand what Hell is about?” That means that God’s Word is not complete and now we have to add the finishing touches to it? That is wrong, God’s Word is complete, it was completed at the close of the first century and we are not to add to it or take away from it!

As much as I would like to believe what this man said, what he went through, when you place it alongside of the Scriptures, it falls far short. And thus, why would God allow him to go to Hell if he is going to report back to us false information? That would make no sense. Now I am not saying he did not experience this, but what I am saying is that what he experienced was not of God because God does not contradict Himself!

First of all Weise tells us that the punishment in Hell is perpetrated upon those who don't believe by demons! From his explanation it would seem that these demons are in control of this fire and these tortures. It is not God pouring out His wrath upon the unbelievers, giving them their just reward for what they have done, but the demons are doing it and that is unscriptural. It reminds me of what Mary Baxter wrote in A Divine Revelation of Hell. She described Hell as being run by Satan and his angels or should I say demons.

Make no mistake about it, Hell is not Satan's playground, he is not the king of hell. In fact, as you look at the Scriptures it would seem that Satan and his demons don't want to go there any more than we do! Let me show you what I mean. In Matthew 8:28-34 we are told, **“When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, ‘If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’ And He said to them, ‘Go.’ So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.”**

What I want you to see here is that these demons recognized that their immediate destiny was to be cast out and their ultimate destiny was to suffer everlasting torment. What they wanted was their freedom until that time to do as much damage as they could before they faced that eternal torment! They knew they had and they know they have limited time and don't want to be sent a moment too soon! In other words, Hell was the last place they wanted to go and yet, according to this book, they are the ones doing the tormenting down in Hell. Not true as the Scriptures clearly teach us!

Make no mistake about it, Satan has never been to Hell and he is not the king of Hell. He is not in control of Hell. The Bible tells us that God created Hell, a place for Satan and his demons, the angels that sided with him.

Another point that we should take into consideration is that Jesus sent this man to Hell, a believer, even though Jesus has died to set us free from that torment. Now some may argue that this was a dream, but make no mistake about it, that is not how Weise makes it out to be. It was very real, it was not a dream! He wrote, "I landed in what appeared to be a prison cell. . . . I was completely naked. . . . This was not a dream- I was actually in this strange place."

I find it hard to believe that Jesus would take a believer to Hell and even more importantly there is no biblical support for something like this. Now what is interesting, because of all the publicity and discussion of how this could not be, his story has changed over the years. Back on May 27, 2011 Weise was on a TBN program where he tried to distance himself from this theological dilemma.

This is what he now said, “This was not a near death experience, this was an out-of-body experience that comes under the classification of a vision in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-2, Paul when he was caught up into heaven in a vision and he said whether in the body or out of the body he didn’t know. The lord just happened to show me that I left my body. That’s the only way a Christian can see hell – in a vision.”

And think about this, will Jesus ever abandon those who have come to Him? Absolutely not and yet he tells us that he felt abandoned when he spent 23 minutes in Hell. How can that be? It can’t because Hebrews 13:5 tells us, **“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”** Don’t you think that Jesus meant it when he said, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you”**? Of course He did and when He says ***“NEVER”*** He means it. He is not going to abandon us!

Also, Paul tells us in Romans 8:35-39, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Can anything or anyone separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus? Of course not! This again should give to each of us a security of our salvation! Spurgeon put it this way in regards to the love of God as the great men and women of faith had. He said: “They did not speak of Christ’s love as though it were a myth to be respected, a tradition to be revered; they viewed it as a blessed reality, and they cast their whole confidence upon it, being persuaded that it would bear them up as upon eagles’ wings, and carry them all their days; resting assured that it would be to them a foundation of rock, against which the waves might beat, and the winds blow, but their soul’s habitation would stand securely if founded upon it.” May we not forget that! If God is for us – who can be against us? Absolutely no one!

Please understand that I believe that God is working in and through His people today but not outside His Word, not in contradiction to His Word and thus, we must hold up everything in the light of God’s Word. It really doesn’t matter who said it! What ends up happening with many of the books, Christian books as well as secular books, is they have to be spectacular. They have to be supernatural, they have to be sensational and if they are not, then they must be adjusted so that they are. Can you imagine how a book would sell if the promo was, “Read the story of the man who had a dream of Hell and what it looked like.” That would not sell and thus, maybe, I am not saying in this case, but at times things are added to make it sound better than it really was. All I can say regarding this book, “23 Minutes in Hell” is that it is contrary to the Scriptures and thus, I must dismiss what it is saying about Hell.

Our only reliable source of information on Hell is from the Scriptures and it is correct in what it has to say because God's Word is truth, period! So let's spend the remainder of our time looking at this place called Hell and then I will conclude on a positive note, the option for man!

First of all let's begin by looking at some Biblical terms for Hell. In the Old Testament it is the Hebrew word Sheol that is translated "hell," "the grave," "death," "destruction," and "the pit." This word Sheol is used some 65 times in the Old Testament and it refers to the place or general abode of the dead.

We see this in Psalm 49:13-14 where we are told, **"This is the way of those who are foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling."** The word "**grave**" in verse 14 is Sheol and we see this in the ESV as we are told, **"This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell."**

In the New Testament we see the Greek word Hades that is translated “hell” and it is similar to Sheol. We see an example of this in the New Testament as Peter is referencing back to words about Jesus in the Old Testament. In Acts 2:27-32 we are told, **“For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”**

Then there is the Greek word Gehenna and this is also translated as Hell but this tends to look to the final judgment and I will explain that in a minute. We see an example of this in Matthew 10:28, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”** The word **“hell”** is Gehenna and we see this played out in The Amplified Bible, which says, **“And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be afraid of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Gehenna).”**

There is one more Greek word for Hell and that is Tartarus and it speaks of the lower regions of Hell and this is a place of torment. Now let me show you how these are broken down, ending with this last one, Tartarus.

We are going to begin with Sheol and Hades, the Hebrew and Greek words for Hell. In Luke chapter 16 we are told beginning in verse 19, **“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.’”** Luke 16:19-31.

The heading in most if not all of your Bibles for this story is the “Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.” And because of that many reject that this is a real story, they tend to think it is a fictional story with some kind of heavenly meaning. First of all Jesus never called it a parable, that is just the heading that was added above the story and that heading is not inspired! Thus, I think it is a real story of a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus. The rich man lived the good life, while the poor man had absolutely nothing; he had to beg for his food. And just as much as these men were real, so too is Sheol or Hades as Jesus shows us here.

Now keep in mind that prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Hell, Hades in the Greek and Sheol in the Hebrew, had two compartments in it. One was the place for those that died outside of the faith and were tormented. The other side is called Abraham’s bosom and it is the place for those who died in the faith went to and were comforted until the Messiah came and set them free and now they too are in heaven.

The only people that are in Hell today are those who have died not believing in Jesus and they are awaiting the final Judgment in the Lake of Fire that is still to come, making Hell, in a sense, a holding tank until that time.

In Ephesians 4:8-10 we are told, “**Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’ what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)**” Thus, those three days and nights He spent in the belly of the earth, He was ministering to those who died in the faith and when He rose, so did they!

Now, please understand that there is no such thing as soul sleep, there is no such thing as annihilation, for Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:8, “**We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**” Those that die in the Lord go to be with the Lord; those that die outside of the Lord go to Hell and await the final judgment in the Lake of fire! I think that is clear!

Also, please understand that the rich man was not excluded from paradise because he was rich, but because of his unbelief in the Messiah, his lack of faith. Also, the poor man didn't get into paradise because he was poor and suffered in this life, but because of his faith in the Messiah. Jesus said in John 14:6, “**... 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'**”

Another important point is that the rich man was aware of things, he had pain, he thirsted, and he didn't want his family to follow in his footsteps and end up in Hell! He wanted to go back and tell them the truth but he is not allowed, why? Because they have Moses or the Law and they have the prophets, the Word of God is what Jesus is saying. You see, Paul says “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” Faith unto salvation comes by hearing the Word of God and applying it to your life!

So why would Jesus allow this man to spend 23 minutes in Hell if he did not let Lazarus or anyone else come back from Hell to warn his family of what Hell is like and not to go there? You see, that makes no sense to me!

And Jesus also makes a very good point when He says that if one would come back from the dead they still wouldn't believe. Shortly after this event we are told of another Lazarus who is going to die and Jesus will raise him from the dead. Now what was the response of the religious leaders to this miracle? In John 12:9-11 we read, "**Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.**" Not only that, but Jesus rose from the dead and they still refused to believe! If you won't believe the Word of God you won't believe at all!

You see, we all have choices to make in this life but the most important decision is what have you done with Jesus? If He is not Lord and Savior now, in death your decision is sealed, there is no second chance. Paul put it this way in Hebrews 9:27, "**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.**" Today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up!

Thus, Sheol and Hades, the same place, is in a sense a holding tank for the final judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of in Revelation chapter 20. All believers will go to be with the Lord, all unbelievers will go to Sheol, Hades or Hell as we call it!

Next we will look at Gehenna. Now please don't be confused with the terms Sheol or Hades for they are just the temporary holding area till the Great White throne Judgment, and understand that there is still torment in Hades. The Lake of Fire or specifically the word Gehenna was originally a term used for the place where the garbage of the city of Jerusalem was burned. It was located outside the city in the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. And smoke would continually rise up from this garbage dump, making it look very unpleasant. Thus, Jesus uses this illustration to point out what the Lake of Fire is all about. Not a pretty picture, but all would get the idea; it would be crystal clear in their minds. They recognized it was not a place of soul sleep, or a place of rest, or annihilation, but a place of continual torment, day and night for eternity!

Remember what Jesus said to His disciples, "**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Gehenna).**" Matthew 10:28. And in Mark 9:43-44 we read of Gehenna when Jesus said, "**If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'**"

This is the eternal state for the unsaved, those who have rejected Jesus Christ and we can read of this in Revelation 20:10-15 where we are told, **“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

This event takes place after the thousand years or Millennial reign of Christ on this earth, after the short rebellion of those during this period of time who have rejected the Lord, if you can believe that anyone would and they will!

First off we see that the Devil is done; he is cast into the Lake of Fire along with the Antichrist and the False Prophet who have been there for 1,000 years already! Now I do realize some people have a hard time believing in eternal punishment and they hold onto the false idea of the annihilation of the wicked, that they just cease to exist. Nice thought but it is wrong.

Do you know in the Greek when it says that they will be “**tormented day and night forever and ever**” what it means? It means that they will be “**tormented day and night forever and ever,**” they will experience eternal pain and suffering! You see, the words mean exactly what they say. Walvoord puts it like this:

There would be no way possible in the Greek language to state more emphatically the everlasting punishment of the lost than here in mentioning both day and night and the expression “forever and ever,” literally “to the ages of ages.”

- John Walvoord

Some people laugh at the idea of Hell or eternal punishment, like it is some kind of joke, that it is not real. Folks, Jesus spoke more about Hell and punishment than anyone else in the Scriptures. And think about it, if it was not real, why did Jesus waste so much time talking about it? He wouldn't! In Mark chapter 9 Jesus is warning people of what is ahead for those who reject Him, those who go down this destructive path to Hell or Gehenna, the Lake of Fire or outer darkness. In Mark 9:44 Jesus said it is a place, **“where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’”**

As you read that it doesn't sound too good, and it is not good. And this is what I believe Jesus is trying to illustrate for us. The word for "**worm**" is maggots. Thus, you have been given this eternal body and these maggots will feed on you for eternity! Not only that, but your eternal body will be fuel for the fire, but you will never be consumed! I know what you're thinking, that is gross, that is shocking! Guess what? That is exactly the point that Jesus is trying to make here. Why have eternal life apart from Him in the Lake of Fire when you can have eternal life with Him, abundant life that is only found in Jesus!

From there, in the last 5 verses of this chapter we see the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of. This judgment will take place after Satan is bound, after the Millennial Kingdom, after Satan is loosed for a season and the Lord, for good, puts down Satan's rebellion and he is cast into the Lake of Fire. And it would seem that this judgment takes place prior to the Lord destroying the heavens and the earth and creating a new heaven and a new earth that are eternal. In this judgment, as we have read, all the wicked will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire, Gehenna or outer darkness for eternity! This is the second death!

Who is doing the judging here? I believe it is Jesus who will be the judge. In John 5:22-30 we are told, **“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”** This judgment will be fair, it will be just, it will be righteous, there will be no arguments by the guilty as they bow before the King of kings and Lord of lords!

This judgment is not for believers, it is not for Christians but for unbelievers! Why is that? Because our sins have already been judged in Jesus on the cross of Calvary and thus, we won't face this judgment. You see, we don't necessarily escape God's judgment, we have it satisfied in Jesus by receiving Him as Lord and Savior and as we do His blood cleanses us from all our sins. It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, "**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"

We as Christians will have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Bema Seat of Christ. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:10, "**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**" This is not a judgment for salvation or punishment but one of rewards. The Lord will not only look at what we have done in this life but also He will judge what the motives behind our actions were.

We are told in I Corinthians 3:12-15, "**Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**" You see, it is not for punishment, but rewards and folks, some of the things we have done with the wrong motives will be burned in the fire, we will lose our reward, but not our salvation!

But here we see all the dead who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior move from Hades in the Greek and Sheol is the Hebrew word, and they will stand before Jesus who is sitting on the throne of judgment. You see, at this point, when you are dead; stature, power, influence, wealth means absolutely nothing! You have rejected Jesus and thus, you will face the judgment!

Now John speaks of two books, the book of life and then another book, which seems to contain multiple volumes. The book of life speaks of all those who have come to Jesus Christ, their names are written in the book of life. Thus, those whose names have not been found in the book of life have already been judged. Notice what Jesus says as He speaks of judgment because **“of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”** John 16:9. Their sin is their rejection of Jesus and thus, they have been judged already. Jesus again spoke of this in John 3:18, where He says **“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”**

If that is true, then what is the Great White Throne Judgment all about? If they are already condemned, already judged because of their rejection of Jesus, why have this other judgment? This judgment is more of a sentencing of the wicked for what they have done in their lives. John says “. . . **And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.**” Revelation 20:12.

Imagine having your life replayed for you - all the things you have done in your life. You are standing before God, and here it comes. Not an encouraging thought. I would not want my life displayed before God, showing all the wrong I have done in my life. Yes, He already knows, but I don't want it replayed and it won't because my sins have been cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more! There is no record of them or should I say film footage! But for the unsaved there is a record, there is film footage!

It is as Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, **“For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”** Every word, every thought, every intent will come before the wicked once again, and thus, there does seem to be degrees of punishment in Gehenna which is based on what the wicked have done and what they did with what God has given to them, what they know about Him.

You see, as we have seen, you are sent to Hell because of your rejection of Jesus Christ but at the Great White Throne Judgment, very clearly we see that the degree of punishment in Hell, in the Lake of Fire is based upon what you have done in this life. The more sinful you were the more punishment you will endure. But please understand this, even if you were the best person around, an outstanding citizen, apart from Christ you will face eternal judgment and there is no end to that for the payment will never be met!

Of this, John Phillips provocatively wrote:

There is a terrible fellowship there. . . . The dead, small and great, stand before God. Dead souls are united to dead bodies in a fellowship of horror and despair. Little men and paltry women whose lives were filled with pettiness, selfishness, and nasty little sins were drab and dowdy, mean, spiteful, peevish, groveling, vulgar, common, and cheap. The great will be there, men who sinned with a high hand, with dash, and courage and flair. Men like Alexander and Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin will be present, men who went for wickedness on a grand scale with the world for their stage and who died unrepentant at last. Now one and all are arraigned and on their way to be damned: a horrible fellowship congregated together for the first and last time.

- John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, pp. 242-243

And finally, death and Hades were done away with, cast into the Lake of Fire. What does that mean? It means that there will be no more death, all the saved will enter into eternity with the Lord. Hades, the holding tank for the wicked until the Great White Throne Judgment, will be emptied and the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire, so there will be no need for this place any longer, a place that was created for Satan and his demons, according to Matthew 25:41, and it is also used, because of man's rebellion, as a place of incarceration for those who have rejected Christ.

Thus, this second death is complete, final, there is no second chance. Anyone whose name is not found in the book of life will be cast into the Lake of Fire, eternally separated from God. And in reality, it all comes down to this. Do you want a fair trial then or a complete pardon now! The fair trial will send you to Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, for you are guilty before God. But, if you come to Jesus you can be assured of your salvation and you will be cleansed of your sins.

You doubt that you can be assured of your salvation? Listen carefully to what Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”** We are also told in I John 5:13, **“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”**

When you think of this second death or this second resurrection, think of it like this. If you are born once you will die twice. If you are born twice you will only die once! What that means is if you are not born again or born twice, physical and spiritual birth, you will die twice; you will not only die physically but spiritually as you spend eternity in judgment. But, if you are born twice, you will only die once, physical death because you will enter into eternity with the Lord!

It is as Alford said, “As there is a second and higher life, there is also a second and deeper death. And as after that life there is no more death, so after that death there is no more life.” And Trapp makes these points as he tells us, “The Devil and the damned have punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without succor [help], crying without comfort, mischief without measure, torments without end and past imagination.”

And please understand this. God gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His desire is that all would come to know Him and enter into eternal life with Him but He will not force anyone to come. Thus, His call is that of an invitation, “**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” Matthew 11:28-30.

Won't you come and enter into life with Him enjoying the fruits of that first resurrection and not experience that second death? Remember, if you are born once you will die twice, but if you are born twice you will only die once! Gehenna is the final place of torment for those who have rejected Jesus!

And lastly, let's look at what Tartarus is all about because again, there are many ideas, but what does the Bible have to say about this place? We read of this place called Tartarus in II Peter 2:4, where Peter tells us, “**For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.**”

Who are these angels that sinned? Obviously they are the ones who rebelled with Lucifer or Satan, but it goes even farther than that. You see, not all those fallen angels are chained, for Satan has his demons or fallen angles at work now. Then who are these angels that are chained in Tartarus or the lowest Hell awaiting judgment?

They obviously did something so bad that they have been chained in Tartarus, the lowest part of Hell. In Genesis 6:1-2 we are told, what I believe they did that caused this judgment upon them. We are told, **“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”** The Living Bible puts these verses like this, **“Now a population explosion took place upon the earth. It was at this time that beings from the spirit world looked upon the beautiful earth women and took any they desired to be their wives.”**

That phrase, **“sons of God”** is used in the Scriptures to refer to angels and in this case, fallen angels. Jude expounds on this more but the implication is that these angels did not keep their proper domain and they co-habitated with women producing Nephillim or fallen ones. Satan was trying to contaminate the human race so that the Messiah could not be born from the seed of a woman. Thus, these angels are now chained in Tartarus awaiting their final judgment. Now, before they are judged I believe God is going to use them as part of His judgment on a Christ rejecting world during the Tribulation Period and you can read of these demon locusts from the bottomless pit in Revelation chapter 9.

But this is what Tartarus is; the place for these fallen angels who had cohabitated with women in Genesis chapter 6 and they are going to remain there until God will use them in His judgment upon a Christ rejecting world.

And please understand that as we saw in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Hell is a place of torment and ultimately every person that rejects Jesus will end up in the Lake of Fire and that will be the place of eternal punishment. This place that is called Hell is a very real place and yet look at the number of people who mock it, make fun of it, say things like, "I would rather party with my friends in Hell then go to Heaven!" They will see how wrong they are.

Let me show you just a couple of things regarding Hell. First of all the punishment in Hell is eternal. In Matthew 25:46 we are told, "**And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**" We have all had bad days but that is nothing compared with a punishment for our sins that is eternal and it does not have to be that way. You see, Christ paid the penalty for our sins; He took the punishment for our sins so we won't have to but the choice is yours. And if you reject Jesus, then you will have a punishment that will never end, it is eternal!

Hell is a place of separation from God. We are told of this in II Thessalonians 1:7-9 as Paul wrote, **“and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”** Not only will they be punished with everlasting destruction for rejecting the free gift of life that is found in Jesus but they will also be separated from the presence of God. I think that is why Gehenna, the Lake of Fire is spoken of as outer darkness for apart from God there is no light.

We also see Hell spoken of as a place of fire. We are told in Revelation 20:15, **“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”** Again, I may not fully understand all that is going on here, but it is outer darkness apart from God and there is a burning fire that will burn for eternity. Not a good thing!

Let me bring this to a close this morning. I think you can clearly see that Hell is real and it is not a place that you want to go. And yet man has a choice, God does not force anyone to go as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

Let's suppose that one day NASA develops a special kind of protective capsule that permits astronauts to take an expedition to within a very close proximity of the sun. This allows them to study the sun's nature while shielding them from its deadly heat and lethal radiation. Let's also suppose that space travel has reached a point where someone from the public domain is afforded the opportunity to accompany these astronauts on their expedition as an observer.

One day a certain man receives a call from NASA explaining how he has been chosen for a journey to the sun. He is also told about the specially designed capsule that was made to shield him from the sun. Yet for some stubborn reason this man refuses to agree to step inside the protective capsule – NASA cannot convince him otherwise – and he still insists upon going anyway.

However, NASA cannot allow him to go because his nature and the nature of the sun cannot coexist at such a close proximity. Therefore, since NASA is responsible for him, values his life, and respects his choice, they cannot permit him to go.

- Norman Geisler & Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations*, p.366

God is gracious, He is merciful and He gives to every person a choice to make. To either receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and enter into that eternal life with Him or reject this free gift of God and enter into eternal punishment apart from Him! You will not be able to stand before a holy and righteous God in your own righteousness, which are like filthy rags. We can only stand before Him with, in a sense, our protective suit on. In other words, we have put on Christ and it is His righteousness that has filled our lives as He has paid in full the penalty for our sin! But it is your choice where you want to spend eternity, smoking or non-smoking!

Let me close with these words for you to think about. No one who is ever in Hell will be able to say to God, “You put me here,” and no one who is in Heaven will ever be able to say, “I put myself here.”