

Heaven And Hell Are Real Places

'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1).

'The heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them (their vast array) ... This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day the Lord God made the earth and the heavens' (Genesis 2:1 & 4).

The Lord created heaven out of nothing – He spoke it into existence. The last three letters in a Hebrew word; 'h.i.m' (pronounced heem) is plural in the Hebrew language, like 's' is in English. Heaven is presented in Hebrew as plural; shemayim. The area called heavens is so vast, so great in size, the only word that can describe it, is the 'expanse'. 'God called the expanse, Heavens ...' (Genesis 1:8). The 'host of them' the 'vast array' infers the heavens are vast, huge, enormous and a host are many. We can see there are not only numerous heavens, but there are several armies in these heavens and they all worship God (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6; Revelation 19:14). 'You stretch out the heavens like a curtain' (Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22). 'Behold, the heavens and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth also, with all that is on it' (Deuteronomy 10:14). 'Behold, the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You' (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 6:18). 'Sing praises to Him Who rides on the heavens of the heavens, the ancient heavens' (Psalm 68:33). 'The heavens are the work of Your hands' (Psalm 102:25). Jesus ascended far above all heavens so His presence could fill the whole universe (Ephesians 4:10). 'The heavens were made by the Word of God' (Hebrews 11:3; 2 Peter 3:5). Jesus Himself is the Word of God (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13), so Jesus created all of the heavens (John 1:1 to 3; Colossians 1:16). As we can see in all of these verses, the heavens, as they are written in the Bible, are always plural. There are several separate levels in the heavens mentioned in the Bible and the Lord God is not restricted to any of them but moves freely around, and fills all of them with His presence. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord (Jeremiah 23:24). Paul was taken to the third heaven, so logically speaking, if there is a third heaven, then there has to be a first and second (2 Corinthians 12:2 to 4). There are several names for the plural heavens written in the scriptures: Firmament, expanse, Kingdom of Heaven, Kingdom of God, Paradise, New Jerusalem, Kingdom of the Father, Kingdom of Jesus, House of the Father, Mount Zion – the City of the living God the Heavenly Jerusalem, Holy of Holies, Holy Place, Holy Habitation, Life, Eternal Life, the Joy, the Heavenly Country and Temple of God.

The first or the lowest heaven is the visible heaven we see and breathe the air. It is the area of our atmosphere and airspace from the earth's surface where dew forms, to where smoke rises, up to where eagles fly, where storms form, up as far up as the sun, moon, planets and stars. Foundations are the lowest area of any building and are necessary for its stability and development. Earth is the necessary foundation for heaven. 'The earth quaked and the foundations of the heavens trembled and shook' (2 Samuel 22:8). 'You Lord, did lay the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the works of Your hands' (Hebrews 1:10). The gifts from heaven are dew and the sun (Deuteronomy 33:13, 14 & 28); dew is formed in our atmosphere and the sun, moon and stars are in the area we call 'space' but all of it is called heaven (Psalm 8:3). Smoke rises to the heavens (Joshua 8:20) but it does not go into space, so the area where our air is on earth is called heaven. Heaven is the area where thunder, lightning, hail and storms form (Exodus 9:23). Eagles fly through the heavens (Proverbs 30:19). Jesus was walking on earth, yet He said He was in heaven (John 3:13). We live on the surface of the earth; in the area God calls the foundations of the heavens; the first heaven; the lowest heaven.

The mid, or second heaven is logically located between the first and the third. There are two verses that speak of the mid-heaven. 'Then I looked and saw an eagle flying in mid-heaven' (Revelation 8:13). 'Then I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven' (Revelation 14:6). If we read the chapters of Revelation between mid-heaven in chapter 8, and mid-heaven in chapter 14, we see a whole picture from 'woe' to 'victory'. In chapter 8, the eagle is crying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth." In chapter 14, the angel has the Eternal Gospel, Babylon has fallen and all of creation is worshipping and adoring our Saviour. The war in heaven is not completely over, but victory is on its way. The devil is cast out of heaven permanently mid-way through these two chapters (Revelation 12:7 to 10), and complete victory is written in chapter 20. So what was happening? The devil was about to be evicted from mid-heaven, once and for all time, and he was putting up an enormous struggle. Of course we know it ends with the devil being thrown into the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20:10) but until that time, he inhabits the mid-heaven.

This can be confirmed by studying Daniel chapters 10, 11 & 12. As Daniel was praying and fasting for an answer to prayer, an angel was sent from God to give the answer. After the angel left a high level of heaven to come to earth, somewhere between heaven and earth, the angel had to fight an evil spirit that ruled over Persia. The angel was assisted by the Archangel Michael and managed to get through to earth. The same angel was accosted again as he was returning to God. Obviously, the evil spirit was midway between

heaven and earth, in the heavenly realm and tried to stop Daniel's prayer being answered. These were two opposing angels that came into conflict – they were not people. Our battle is not with people, it is in the spiritual realm. Michael is the Archangel responsible for watching over Israel. There are holy angels who have tasks given to them for us, to do us good. There are evil beings that have tasks given to them for evil. It is all played out in the heavenly sphere. The holy angel who spoke to Daniel said he had to go back and fight again in the heavenlies. That shows us the holy angel had to pass through the devil's territory when he came down to Daniel and again to get back to his own place in heaven. The evil prince of Persia (an evil spirit) fought with the holy angels over ancient Israel, and in our modern time the prince of Persia (now Iran) is still fighting over Israel. The area the evil prince of Persia has been allotted, covers the whole of what was ancient Persia and that was a huge area. That battle has been going on for thousands of years and it may help some people understand what is actually going on in Israel and the surrounding areas in our present time. It is a spiritual battle being played out on earth. 'We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the powers of darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly sphere' (Ephesians 6:12). The heavenly sphere, or mid-heaven is where the headquarters of the devil, the principalities, evil powers and evil rulers of wickedness are. 'The wisdom of God ... might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly sphere' (Ephesians 3:10). The devil was evicted from heaven because he said he would ascend to a higher heaven and wanted to exalt his throne above the stars of God in the uttermost north, or the highest of the high heavens. Instead he was cut down to the ground (Isaiah 14:12 to 14). Jesus saw the devil fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18).

The fallen angels are in hell in chains awaiting judgement because they left their place of power and abandoned their proper dwelling place (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) but the devil is not with them. After the final judgement he will be thrown into the eternal lake of fire along with the beast, the false prophet and all non-believers (Revelation 19:20; 20:10 & 15). In the meantime, the devil's place of habitat is the heavenly realm because that is the natural place of angels. The devil lives amongst the angels and presents himself to God (Job 1:6 & 7; 2:1 & 2). Evil spirits can also present themselves to God in heaven (1 Kings 22:21; 2 Chronicles 18:20). Jesus said the powers in the heavens would be shaken (Mark 13:25), that is the principalities and powers and rulers of darkness that currently inhabit the mid-heaven.

Paradise is the third heaven and is above the first and second heavens. 'I know that this man was caught up to the third heaven into Paradise' (2 Corinthians 12:2 to 4). Paradise is also called Abraham's Side and the Kingdom of Heaven. Paradise was never written about in the Old Testament. Jesus was the first to ever mention Paradise and that was when He told the repentant thief on the cross beside Him, he would be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Heaven was not open to people until Jesus was baptised. 'No one has ever gone up to heaven' (John 3:13). The exceptions were Enoch and Elijah who both were taken up into heaven while still alive (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11). 'When Jesus was baptised, He went up at once out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened' (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10). When Stephen was stoned to death, he went straight to heaven (Acts 7:56 & 59). Jesus said Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 8:11; 22:32). The Tree of Life, once in the centre of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) is now in Paradise (Revelation 2:7). People in Paradise and people in hell can see and speak to one another, but there is a chasm between heaven and hell so nobody can pass from one to the other (Luke 16:19 to 31). Paradise is where all born-again believers go immediately after death. We all share in the heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). Our hope is laid up for us in heaven (Colossians 1:5). There is an inheritance reserved for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:4).

The other heavens are very much the Lord's domain and we do not know in what order they are set. What we do know is they are above the first three heavens, and God would have to be higher than them because He looks down from His Holy Habitation into heaven (Deuteronomy 26:15; Psalm 113:6) and God sits in the highest heaven above all things. There is the highest heaven – the 'Uttermost North' – the heaven where His throne is – the place called His Holy Temple – the heavens of the heavens, which are self-explanatory. They are the heavens for all the other heavens and the Lord God is not restricted to any of them, but moves freely around, and fills all of them with His presence. Jesus ascended and passed through the heavens (Hebrews 4:14). There is peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven (Luke 19:38). The Lord is above the heavens (Psalm 108:5). 'Is not God in the highest of heaven? Behold the height of the stars, how high they are!' (Job 22:12). 'Heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him' (2 Chronicles 2:6). God has set His glory above the heavens (Psalm 8:1). Heaven is God's throne (Isaiah 66:1). God's throne is above the dwelling place of the angels and cherubim. 'God is enthroned above the cherubim' (2 Kings 19:15; Isaiah 37:16; Ezekiel 10:1). 'Behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne ... Twenty-four other thrones surrounded the throne, and seated on these thrones were twenty-four elders' (Revelation 4:2 & 4). The twenty-four elders certainly have a high place in heaven. The throne of the Lord is in the highest heaven, the highest of places where angels and the Lord live. There are so many angels they are called armies (1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18; Luke 2:13). Only when God opens our spiritual eyes, are we able to see into heaven (Isaiah 6:1 to 3; Daniel 10:7). Only when God takes us in the spirit, are we able to visit

heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2 to 4). Obviously the highest heavens are an incredible distance from earth, yet God can hear our thoughts and prayers from there (1 Kings 8:30 & 49; 2 Chronicles 6:21 & 39). 'The cry of the sufferers reached heaven' (1 Samuel 5:12). Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed and cried to heaven for help, then the Lord sent an angel to assist them (2 Chronicles 32:20 & 21). God sits in heaven and laughs at the foolishness of sinners (Psalm 2:4). God sees us from His throne in heaven (Psalm 11:4).

Heaven is the Lord's sanctuary and temple. 'For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary, from heaven did the Lord behold the earth' (Psalm 102:19); 'Praise God in His sanctuary, praise Him in the heavens of His power' (Psalm 150:1); The Lord God rides through the heavens and majestically through the skies (Deuteronomy 33:26). 'God bowed the heavens and came down. He rode on a cherub and flew. He was seen on the wings of the wind' (2 Samuel 22:10 & 11; Psalm 18:9 & 10; 104:3). 'The temple of God in heaven was thrown open and the ark of His covenant was seen standing inside His temple' (Revelation 11:19). 'He stretches out the Uttermost North over empty space' (Job 26:7). The scriptures make it clear God owns both heaven and earth. Melchizedek stated, "God Most High, Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth," then Abraham seconded that, "Lord, God Most High, the Possessor and Maker of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:19 & 22). 'All that is in the heavens and the earth is the Lord's' (1 Chronicles 29:11). 'Whatever is under the whole heavens is Mine' (Job 41:11). 'The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all that is in it. You have founded them' (Psalm 89:11).

God has given all authority in heaven and on earth to Jesus (Matthew 28:18). Jesus ascended into heaven and is sitting down at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20), with all angels, authorities and powers made subservient to Him (1 Peter 3:22). Jesus must stay in heaven and cannot come again until all things have been restored, that is until Israel and the church is restored (Acts 3:21). Before the Lord returns, there will be great signs from heaven (Luke 21:11). Israel is the house of God and the gateway to heaven (Genesis 28:12 & 17). That is because Israel is the land God has chosen to show the world the way of salvation, through our Jewish Messiah (John 4:22). Israel is the land of the Jews and is therefore our gateway to heaven, and Jacob was aware of that. The area Jacob named Bethel (Genesis 28:19) is still there and is still called Bethel which means 'house of God'. The Children of Israel ate Manna, which was angel's food (Psalm 78:25). It was bread from heaven and Jesus is the Bread from heaven (John 6:31 to 33). Jesus is the Lord from Heaven. We will bear the image of the Man of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47 & 49) and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). We sit in heavenly places because we have been saved by Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). The names of genuine believers are written down in heaven (Luke 10:20). Through God the Father, by the blood of Jesus, there will be reconciliation and peace in heaven, as well as on earth (Colossians 1:20). Jesus is the Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1). At the name of Jesus, every knee must bow, in heaven and on earth (Philippians 2:10). Jesus has been exalted higher than the heavens (Hebrews 7:26). The Holy Spirit is from heaven (1 Peter 1:12).

There are various positions or gradient levels in heaven that are allotted to us, according to the lives we live on earth and according to the works we do. There are people who will only just get into heaven and will suffer loss because they will receive no rewards whatsoever. Some people will be least in the Kingdom of Heaven and some will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. 'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and He will reward everyone according to their deeds' (Matthew 16:27). 'For we must all appear before the judgement seat of the Lord, so that each one may receive his pay according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil' (2 Corinthians 5:10). 'If anyone builds on the Foundation, whether it be with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, the work of each person will become known, for the day (of judgement) will declare it. It will be revealed with fire, and the worth of the work each person has done will be tested by fire. If any person's work is burned up, he will suffer the loss, losing his reward, though he himself will be saved, but only as one who has passed through the fire (1 Corinthians 3:12 to 15). 'Whoever breaks the commandments and teaches men so, will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven, but he who practices them and teaches others to do so, will be called great in the Kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5:19). 'Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven, is greater than John' (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28). 'At that time the disciples asked Jesus, "Who then is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" Jesus answered, "Whoever will humble himself ... is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1 & 4).

'The Lord is going to shake earth and the heavens yet once more. This expression, 'yet once more' indicates the final removal of all that can be shaken – of what has been created – in order, that what cannot be shaken may remain' (Hebrews 12:26 & 27). The Lord is going to burn the first and second heavens and earth because of sin and wickedness, and He will remove from heaven all causes of offence (Revelation 21:27). Heaven and earth will pass away (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). 'The heavens will vanish away like smoke and the earth will melt like an old garment (Isaiah 51:6) 'The heavens and earth have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgement ... The heavens will vanish with a thunderous crash and the

elements of the universe will be burned with extreme heat, and the earth will be burned up ... The flaming heavens will be dissolved and the universe will melt with extreme heat, but we look for a new heavens and a new earth according to His promise (2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12 & 13). Genuine believers will then live on a newly created, new heavens and new earth. 'For behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth ... For the new heavens and the new earth I will make, will remain before Me' (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). 'Then I (John) saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the former heavens and the former earth had passed away and there no longer existed any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God ... then I heard a mighty voice from the throne saying, "See! The abode of God is with men ... but only those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:1 to 3 & 27).

To get into heaven we have to be righteous, not religious, and we have to do the will of God (Matthew 5:20; 7:21). There is joy in heaven every time a sinner repents and comes to God (Luke 15:7). The heavens can open up (John 1:51; Acts 10:11; Revelation 4:1; 19:11). We are not to make an oath by using heaven because it is where God the Father lives, and so we may not fall under condemnation (Matthew 5:34; James 5:12). Nobody marries once they get to heaven because we will be like the angels (angels were not given permission to marry and reproduce) (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25). Blessings come from heaven (Genesis 49:25). We are not to make images of anything that is in heaven (Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8). The Lord spoke to Moses and the children of Israel from heaven (Exodus 20:22; Deuteronomy 4:36; Nehemiah 9:13). On several occasions the Lord called on heaven to be a witness for Him (Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1). Whatever there is in heaven, there is a copy here on earth (Hebrews 9:23). There is time in heaven, just like on earth. 'There was silence for about half an hour in heaven' (Revelation 8:1). 'Yielding each month, its fresh crop of fruit' (Revelation 22:2). When we sin, we sin against heaven (Luke 15:18 & 21) and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven (Romans 1:18). God rules heaven and His will is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). The Lord has set laws in heaven, and heaven rules the earth. 'Do you know the law of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?' (Job 38:33). 'The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His Kingdom rules over all' (Psalm 103:19). 'God is in the heavens and He does whatever He pleases' (Psalm 115:3). 'Whatever the Lord pleases, that He has done in the heavens and on the earth and in the sea' (Psalm 135:6).

All of our eternal treasures are in heaven (Matthew 6:20; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33). All our spiritual rewards will come to us once we get to heaven (Luke 6:23; 18:22). Some of the rewards we will receive are called the Crown of Life (James 1:12), Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4), Incorruptible Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25), Great Reward (Matthew 5:12), Glorious Inheritance (Ephesians 1:18) and Eternal Inheritance (Hebrews 9:15). Whatever happens on earth or in heaven, the Lord has the last say. 'Your Word is settled in heaven' (Psalm 119:89).

Hell is just as real as heaven. Jesus spoke about hell as much as He spoke about heaven. 'He (Jesus) will say to those at His left hand, "Begone from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). 'Whoever says, "You cursed fool" will be unable to escape the fire of Gehenna' (Matthew 5:22). 'He will be driven into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 8:12). 'Be afraid of Him Who can destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matthew 10:28). 'It is better for you to enter eternal life maimed than to be thrown into everlasting fire' (Matthew 18:8 & 9). 'Tie him hand and foot and throw him into outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth; for many are called but few are chosen' (Matthew 22:13 & 14). 'God will scourge him and put him with the hypocrites; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 24:51). 'Throw the good-for-nothing servant into the outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth ... Then they will go away into eternal punishment ...' (Matthew 25:30 & 46). 'It is better for you to go into eternal life maimed than go to hell; into the fire that cannot be put out. It is better to go into eternal life crippled, than to be cast into hell. It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than be thrown into hell with two eyes. Hell is where their 'worm' does not die and the fire is not extinguished' (Mark 9:43 to 48). 'There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you, yourselves, being banished and driven out' (Luke 13:28).

Jesus said so much about hell, outer darkness, eternal punishment and other phrases for the same place, we cannot write everything He said. Hell is a real place where unsaved souls go to wait for the final judgement of mankind. Hell has not been invented by fundamentalists to frighten people into being 'good'. The subject of hell is so distasteful, many pastors and preachers will not teach on the subject for fear of scaring parishioners away. Many people today feel that 'hell-fire and brimstone' preaching has no place in our modern churches and have 'watered down' the truth and the terrible, terrible reality of eternity without God. That thinking is wrong. Christians forget John the Baptist, Jesus and the apostles all preached about hell and so should we. John the Baptist was not being negative when he called the Pharisees and Sadducees 'vipers'. John encouraged everyone to face up to the truth about themselves, rather than blaming others for their sin.

We, who know the truth, have an obligation to tell the truth to others. God does not give us divine revelations so we can enjoy them and sit on them. God gives us revelations so we can share that knowledge with as many people as possible. Christians have the God-given responsibility to tell the unsaved, the consequences of rejecting our Saviour and we should be out there telling everybody we can. It would be a terrible feeling to be safely going into eternity with God, only to have a loved one – a grandparent for example – say to you, “I could have been going with you – if only you had told me – now I am destined for eternity without God.” Stop for a moment and close your eyes. Picture that scenario. A loved one on their way to hell, screaming for mercy because you chose not to tell them! We must open our mouths and speak of the love of God and the only way of salvation – which is through Jesus.

In the Old Testament hell was known as Sheol, which means ‘the place of the dead’. Sheol burns with the Lord’s anger. ‘A fire is kindled by My anger and it burns to the depths of Sheol’ (Deuteronomy 32:22). From the first recorded death of Abel right up to the time of Jesus’ resurrection, every adult who died went to Sheol. When Jesus was baptised and the heavens were opened (Mark 7:34), all righteous people waiting in Sheol went to heaven (Matthew 8:11), and now all righteous people who die go straight to heaven (Acts 7:59). Children always go straight to be with God because they are too young to be considered sinners. King David had accepted the death of his baby boy and knew he was in heaven, and David said he would one day go to join his baby (2 Samuel 12:23). A person has to make a conscious decision to reject God, before He blots their name out of His book that was written before the foundation of the world (Exodus 32:32 & 33; Psalm 9:5; Revelation 17:8); but they will still fall down and worship Jesus (Revelation 13:8). Once a person repents, their names are re-written into the Lamb’s Book of Life where only the righteous people have their names written (Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 20:12; 21:27).

The words Hades and Gehenna were only used in the New Testament but mean the same as Sheol. When Jesus was dead for those three days, He went into Hades/Sheol and preached to the people there, and notice Sheol was called prison (1 Peter 3:19 & 20; 4:6). If there was no chance of repentance then preaching to the dead would have been pointless so logically, there must have been some chance of saving those people. When Jesus walked out of Hades then rose from the dead, He overcame death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). The righteous who had died, rose from their graves and walked around Jerusalem for about a month (Matthew 27:52 & 53). Everybody who has ever lived and died will be resurrected on the last day (John 6:40). ‘Many of those who are buried will awake. Some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt’ (Daniel 12:2). ‘If anyone’s name was not recorded in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire’ (Revelation 20:15). John the Baptist knew hell was real. ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath of God? Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance ... He (Jesus) will burn the chaff with fire that cannot be extinguished’ (Matthew 3:7, 8 & 12). ‘Even now, the axe is laid to the root of the trees, so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. But the chaff He (Jesus) will burn with fire that cannot be extinguished’ (Luke 3:9 & 17).

Jesus told this story of devastation. ‘There was a certain rich man who clothed himself in purple and fine linen. He revelled, feasted and made merry in splendour every day. At his gate there was a certain utterly destitute man named Lazarus, covered with sores. The dogs even came and licked his sores. Lazarus desired to be satisfied with what fell from the rich man’s table. Lazarus died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus at his side. He cried out and said, “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.” Abraham said, “Child, remember you in your lifetime received comforts and delights and Lazarus in like manner the discomforts and distresses? Now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. Besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so those who want to pass from heaven to you may not be able, and no one may pass from Hades to us.” The man said, “Then, father, I beseech you to send him to my father’s house for I have five brothers, so he may give testimony and warn them, lest they too come into this place of torment.” Abraham said, “They have Moses and the Prophets, let them listen to them.” He pleaded, “No, father Abraham, if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.” Abraham said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe even if someone should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:19 to 31).

Those above verses show us Jesus was serious about the reality of hell and everlasting punishment. Hell is real. It is a waiting place for those who are headed for the lake of fire which is much worse, and eventually, even Hades itself will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 14 & 15). Hell is torment and suffering. People in hell will see the righteous in heaven and vice versa. It is not possible to move between hell and heaven. Hell is full of sadness, regret, pain and anguish. The devil, the beast and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire along with unsaved people and fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6) who

are already in pits of gloom and darkness while they too wait for the final judgement. When people see the devil in the lake of fire, he will be in the same situation as unsaved people and will therefore not be so scary. People will be amazed at the devil's hopeless situation (Isaiah 14:12 to 19). The lake of fire was designed for the devil and his fallen angels – not for people (Matthew 25:41), but sadly there will be more people in there than in heaven. What is startling and real is the terribleness of the lake of fire. It is so terrible, demons know they are going there and are terrified of the place (Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28; James 2:19). If they are terrified, then so should people be terrified.

The apostles said a lot about hell. We learn from Paul we have the victory over the fear of death and there is no fear of damnation. 'Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?' (1 Corinthians 15:55). The wonderfully great news is: 'If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10:9). 'Repent therefore and be baptised, every one of you in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). 'If we confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9). If you have done these things and God has cleansed you from unrighteousness – then you will be righteous and your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life! Hallelujah!!

Amen and God bless you.

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