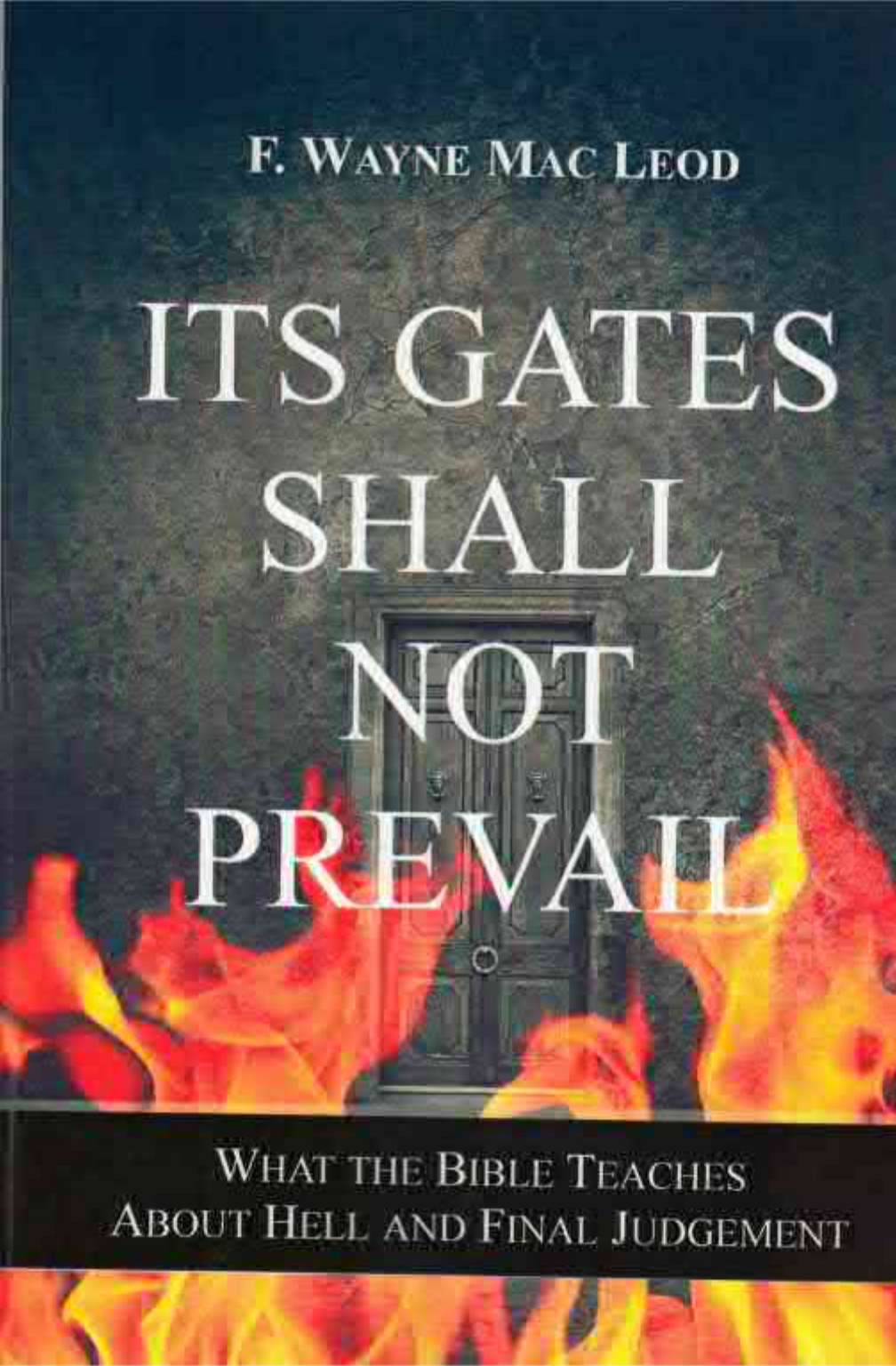


F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

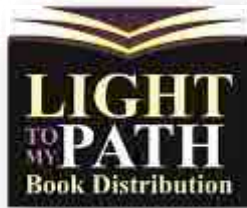


# ITS GATES SHALL NOT PREVAIL

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES  
ABOUT HELL AND FINAL JUDGEMENT

# Its Gates Shall Not Prevail

*What the Bible Teaches about Hell  
and Final Judgement*



F. Wayne Mac Leod

Light To My Path Book Distribution  
Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, CANADA

Its Gates Shall Not Prevail

Copyright © 2015 by F. Wayne Mac Leod

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the author.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®) Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2007

Published by Light To My Path Book Distribution  
153 Atlantic Street, Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, CANADA B1V  
1Y5

Special thanks to the proof readers Diane Mac Leod and Pat Schmidt without whom this book would be much harder to read.

## Table of Contents

Preface .....	1
Gehenna, Hades, Tartaros .....	3
A Place of Suffering and Pain .....	11
The Eternal Nature of Hell .....	19
New Testament Descriptions of Hell .....	27
The Inhabitants of Hell .....	37
The Power of Christ Over Hell .....	49



## PREFACE

---

The subject of hell is not an easy one to address, but it is one the Lord has put on my heart to examine in this study. As I begin, I am conscious of the temptation to go beyond what Scripture teaches. There are many unanswered questions about hell. I am afraid that these questions will have to remain unanswered. I have learned early in my ministry that where the Scriptures are silent I too must be silent, as anything beyond Scripture is mere speculation.

In this study we will examine the New Testament teaching about hell. In choosing to limit our reflection to the New Testament, I am not saying that this doctrine is a New Testament one only. The idea of hell and eternal punishment is also found in the Old Testament, but that is another study in itself. Over the course of the next few chapters we will look at the Greek words used to speak of hell. We will also examine what Jesus and the apostles teach on this subject and consider their prophetic words concerning those who will be sentenced to this place of darkness.

In the end, I would like to point the reader to Christ and His victory over hell, for in Him alone can we find full release from its condemnation. I realize this is a difficult subject to deal with, but it is also one we dare not ignore. A clear understanding of what Jesus and the apostles teach about

hell ought to motivate us to share Christ as the only hope. It should also move us to deep gratitude for the work of the Lord Jesus on our behalf. May this study be used to bring many to Christ and to draw those who already know Him to a place of deeper gratitude and thanksgiving.

God bless

F. Wayne MacLeod

# 1

## GEHENNA, HADES, TARTAROS

---

As we begin our study of the New Testament teaching about hell, it is important that we examine the Greek words used by Jesus and His apostles. The New Testament uses three Greek words to speak about hell.

### GEHENNA

The first Greek word used to describe hell is the word "*gehenna*". This word is used twelve times in the New Testament. Out of the twelve occurrences of this word, Jesus uses it eleven times.

The word "*gehenna*" comes from two Hebrew words. The first is the word "*gay*" which refers to a steep valley or a narrow gorge. The second is the Hebrew word "*hinm*" or "Hinnom". Together these two words refer to the Valley of Hinnom.



The Valley of Hinnom was a steep and narrow valley to the south west of Jerusalem. It formed part of the border between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah (see Joshua 18:16). The valley had a significant history. An understanding of this history will help us better understand why it was used by Jesus and the apostles to speak about hell.

### *Child Sacrifice*

The Valley of Hinnom was a location where a number of demonic practices were observed. 2 Chronicles 28:2-3 describes the practice of King Ahaz who reigned in Jerusalem:

(2) but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, (3) and he made offerings in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. (2 Chronicles 28)

Later on in the history of Judah we read about the practice of King Manasseh:

(6) And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. (2 Chronicles 33:6)

We have here the record of two kings of Judah who burned their children in the fire as a sacrifice to pagan gods in the Valley of Hinnom. The Valley of Hinnom was known to be

a place where children were burnt in the demonic practice of child sacrifice.

### *Place of Slaughter and Dead Bodies*

God spoke out against the evil practices that took place in the Valley of Hinnom through the prophet Jeremiah:

(31) And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their son and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. (32) Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury in Topheth, because there is no room elsewhere, (33) And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the beasts of the earth, and none will frighten them away. (Jeremiah 7:31-33)

The Lord cursed this valley because of the evil that took place in it. According to Jeremiah, the valley would become known as a valley of slaughter. There in that valley, the bodies of the dead would be cast to rot and decay. There the birds of the air and the wild beasts would roam freely eating the decaying remains of these corpses.

### *A Place of Impurities and Defilement*

Historically, the Valley of Hinnom became a place where the garbage of the city was thrown. The bodies of dead animals or criminals were cast into the fires of the valley. These fires were kept burning to get rid of the impurities. Smoke rose from these fires on a continual basis (see

<http://biblehub.com/topical/h/hinnom.htm>). The Valley was an unclean place where all that was impure and defiled was cast.

The use of the word "gehenna" or Valley of Hinnom, to describe hell is significant. It tells us that hell is a place of ungodly practices, death and defilement where the fires of judgement continually rise consuming the decaying remains of corpses cast into it.

## HADES

The second Greek word used to describe hell is the word "*hades*." It occurs ten times in the New Testament and is used by both Jesus and the apostles. Hades is not as easy to define as *gehenna*. Hades is literally the place of the dead. When we speak of the place of the dead, however, we are not speaking about a grave where we bury the physical body. It appears to be the place where the soul of the unbeliever goes after death.

Probably the best description of Hades is seen in Luke 16:19-31. Here in this passage the Lord Jesus speaks about a rich man and Lazarus. The rich man lived a life of luxury. Lazarus was a poor man who ate the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. When Lazarus died he was taken by the angels to Abraham's side. When the rich man died, however, he went to Hades (Luke 16:23). Jesus went on to describe what the rich man experienced in Hades:

(23) and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at this side. (24) And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame. (25) But Abraham said,

"Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. (26) And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us." (Luke 16)

There are some clear points we need to make about Hades from this passage.

### *Hades is for Those Who Do Not Belong to God*

Notice first in this story that Lazarus was conducted after his death into the presence of Abraham by the angels. The rich man's destiny was very different. He was sent to Hades. This shows us that the destiny of those who belong to God and those who do not belong to God are very different after death. Hades is a place for those who have rejected God and His salvation.

### *Hades is a Place of Torment*

The second point we need to notice in this story is that Hades was a place of torment for the rich man. He begged Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch his tongue with the water. Even that simple gesture would have brought relief from the flames. The rich man is very conscious of pain and suffering in Hades.

*Hades is a Place from Which No One Can Escape*

Finally, notice in this passage that Abraham makes it clear to the rich man that there was a great chasm between Hades and the place where Lazarus rested. That chasm was such that no one could pass from one side to the other. Those who went to Hades would remain there forever with no hope of ever crossing the chasm into the presence of God. Hades, therefore, is a permanent separation from God and His blessings.

## TARTAROS

There is one final Greek word used to describe hell. This word is only used once in the New Testament by Peter.

(4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgement... (2 Peter 2:4)

The Greek word used for hell by Peter in this passage is unique in the New Testament. It is the word "*tartaros*". "*Tartaros*" was a Greek concept. Like Hades, it was the place of the wicked dead. Tartaros was considered by the Greeks, however, to be the lowest abyss of Hades. It was reserved for the most wicked of spirits and the severest of torments. Peter seems to be telling his readers that God severely punished these wicked angels by sending them to the deepest darkness of Hades—to Tartaros itself. This may indicate that just as there are degrees of rewards in heaven, so there may be degrees of punishment for evil in hell.

What do these words teach us about hell? Jesus and the apostles described a place called Gehenna, Hades and

Tartaros. This is a place to where the ungodly are sentenced. Each of these words sheds light on the nature of hell. Gehenna speaks of a deep valley or pit into which impurities are cast to be burnt. It is a place of slaughter and death. Hades is a place of torment separated by a chasm that cannot be crossed. Tartaros is a deep, dark abyss inhabited by evil spirits.

While the teaching of Jesus and the apostles is not pleasant, we cannot deny that they spoke of hell as an eternal separation from God and a place of judgement and torment. They believed in a real hell and warned about it in their teaching.

For Consideration:

- What is the origin of the word "*gehenna*"? What does the word teach us about hell?
- How does Jesus' teaching about the rich man and Lazarus help us understand the word "*hades*"? What does this story tell us about Hades?
- What is the difference between Tartaros and Hades? Could this indicate a degree of torment in hell?
- Why is the teaching of Jesus and the apostles a difficult one for our society to accept?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to consider what the three Greek words we have examined teach us about hell. If you know the Lord Jesus today, take a moment to thank Him for His victory over hell.

- Ask God to give you greater compassion for those around you who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.
- Take a moment to pray for a loved one or an acquaintance who does not know the Lord. Ask God to reveal Himself to them.
- Ask God to give you a compassionate heart as you continue this study. Ask Him to help you see and feel the reality of what Scriptures teach on this important subject.

## 2

# A PLACE OF SUFFERING AND PAIN

---

It is never easy to speak about the topic of hell. It is, however, clearly taught in Scripture and therefore it is important that we understand something about it. It is evident from the teaching of Jesus and the apostles that hell is a place of tremendous suffering and pain.

In the previous chapter we examined the illustration of Lazarus and the rich man:

(23) and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. (24) And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame. (25) But Abraham said, "Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. (26) And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be



able, and none may cross from there to us." (Luke 16:23-26)

This passage describes, in part, the experience of the rich man in Hades. Notice first, in verse 23 that the rich man is said to be in torment. The passage does not go into detail to describe this torment except to say that his anguish was because of the flames of Hades. It is important to note that while these flames tormented him, they did not destroy him. He lived to suffer the agony of these flames.

Notice also the rich man's request. He asked Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger into some water to cool his tongue. Imagine that you have been working hard on a hot summer day. The heat has had its effect on you and your body is crying out for water. How much of your thirst would be quenched by dipping the tip of your finger in a glass of water and putting it on your tongue? The suffering of the rich man in this story is such that he longed for even a single drop of water to bring relief.

The other important detail we need to see from this story about the rich man and Lazarus is the fact that there was a great chasm fixed between Hades and Heaven so that there could be no passing from one to the other. Those who enter Hades remain there. Added to the physical suffering of Hades is the understanding that all hope of escape is gone. The sense of despair would be obvious for this rich man as he contemplated eternity in this place of torment and suffering.

Listen to what Jesus taught in Mark 9:43-48:

(43) And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. (45)

And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. (47) And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, (48) where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

What Jesus taught about hell in these verses is repeated several times in the New Testament (see Matthew 5:29-30; 18:9). What is Jesus telling us here? He is telling us that the agony of hell is such that we would do well to avoid it at all costs. It would be better to cut off our hand or foot and live as a cripple for the rest of our earthly life than to experience the torment of hell. It would be better to tear out an eye and live without sight than to suffer the flames of hell. Jesus is not literally telling us to do these horrible things to ourselves. What He is saying, however, is that taking an axe to our hand or foot or a knife to our eye and living a whole life on earth with the consequences would be far less painful than the torment of hell. The most violent thing that could happen to us on earth is nothing compared to the eternal anguish of hell.

Jesus describes hell in Matthew 8:11-12 as a place of darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth:

(11) I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, (12) while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8)

There are two Greek words translated by the English word "weeping" in the New Testament. The first word is "*dakryo*" which refers to a shedding of tears and a quiet sorrow. The second word is "*klauthmos*" which comes from the word "*klaio*" describing a wailing or a loud cry of pain and agony. Jesus uses this second word to describe the loud cries of despair and anguish in hell. The gnashing of teeth refers to depth of agony experienced by those who suffer in hell. Jesus speaks of this weeping and gnashing of teeth also in Matthew 22:13 and 25:30.

In Luke 8:26-33 we have the story of a man who was possessed by a number of demons. He refused to wear any clothes or live in a house. In fact, he chose to live among the tombs. The demons that possessed him would overcome him at times. The people of the community feared him and attempted to bind him with shackles and chains. When the spirits manifested themselves, however, this man would break the chains and wander into the desert.

When Jesus encountered the man, he commanded that the evil spirits come out of him (Luke 8:29). Listen to the response of the demons in Luke 8:31, 32:

(31) And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. (32) Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission.

When commanded to leave the man, the demons begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss. An abyss is a bottomless pit, a term used in Scripture to describe hell (see Revelation 11:7; 20:1-3). These demons understood better than anyone, the nature of hell and its torments. They

begged Jesus to spare them this agony. Even demons fear hell.

In Revelation 9 the bottomless pit, another picture of hell, is described:

(1) And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. (2) He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. (3) Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. (4) They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (5) They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. (6) And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. (Revelation 9)

There are some important details we need to see in this passage. Notice first that when the shaft of the bottomless pit was opened, smoke arose from it like the smoke of a great furnace. The smoke was so thick that it darkened the light of the sun. Imagine living in a place where the smoke was so great it blocked the light of the sun. This would be a very inhospitable environment in which to live.

Notice also what was living in that inhospitable environment. Revelation 9:3 tells us that locust like creatures rose from this abyss. Locusts in Scripture are often seen as a

devouring insect. They ate up the livelihood of mankind and left him with nothing.

The locusts of Revelation 9 were given the power of a scorpion to sting and inflict great pain. Notice that they were only permitted to harm those who did not know the Lord (Revelation 9:4). The pain they inflicted was so great that those who were stung by them preferred death to the pain of these stings. While the passage describes the locusts leaving the pit to inflict these wounds on the people of the earth, what we need to understand is that these locusts inhabited the bottomless pit of hell. I certainly would not want to live in their presence.

Notice finally that these locusts only had the power to inflict pain but they could not kill. People longed to die and cried out for death, but death would not come to them. They continued to live in agony. Certainly what we see in this passage gives us a glimpse of the reality of hell and its torment.

Let me conclude this reflection with one more verse from Revelation 20:10:

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

We will examine this verse in greater detail in another context. What is important for us to note here is that Satan and his helpers were cast into hell where they would be tormented day and night forever. There does not appear to be any relief from this torment. Day and night they suffered the agony of their rebellion against God and His purpose.

What do these verses teach us about hell? They teach us that hell is a place of such agony that even the tip of a finger dipped in cold water would be a relief from the suffering experienced. Its misery cannot be compared to even the most violent of crimes against our body. The cutting off of hands and feet or the plucking out of eyes would be preferable to the bitter anguish of hell. It is a place of loud wailing—a place so evil that even the demons of Satan fear to go there. It is an inhospitable place of dark smoke, fire and grief so intense that death is longed for more than anything else.

We may look at these verses and question how a loving God could allow such agony, but this is not the subject of this study. The reality of the matter is that the truths we have examined in this chapter are clearly taught by Jesus and the apostles. They warn us about a place called hell that it is a place of terrible suffering and torment. It is in love that God warns us today. It is in love that God sent His Son to die, defeating the power of sin so that all who turn to Him can escape its flames.

#### For Consideration:

- What do the verses examined in this chapter teach us about the intensity of agony and suffering in hell?
- What does Luke 8:31-32 teach us about what the demons think of hell?
- What do we learn from Revelation 9:1-5 about the bottomless pit of hell? What kind of place is it?

- Is there relief from the agony and torment of hell for Satan and his angels according to Revelation 20:10?
- Does the fact that we do not understand why God would allow such suffering change the truth we see in these verses?
- What hope do we have of victory over the agony of hell?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord that sin will be judged.
- Ask God to help you to see the seriousness of sin and its eternal implication.
- Ask God to help you to accept the truth He presents to us here in His word about the reality of a final judgement in hell.
- Take a moment to ask the Lord to open the hearts of your loved ones to the reality of Jesus' teaching about hell.

# 3

## THE ETERNAL NATURE OF HELL

---

We have seen that Jesus and the apostles taught that hell was a place of pain and torment. We will now consider what the New Testament teaches us about the eternal nature of hell.

In Matthew 3 we are introduced to John the Baptist. On one occasion when he was preaching and baptising by the Jordan River, he saw a group of Pharisees and Sadducees coming to listen to him and watch what he was doing. John understood the reputation of these two groups and may have questioned their motives in being present that day. Listen to what he told them in Matthew 3:7-12:

(7) But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (8) Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. (9) And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. (10) Even now the axe is laid to



the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear food fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (11) I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (12) His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3)

The picture John the Baptist paints here is of a man who is separating the wheat from the chaff. He takes a fork and shakes the wheat so that the chaff is separated from it. The wheat he carefully stores in his barn but the chaff he burns in the fire. John uses this illustration to show what would happen to the Pharisees and Sadducees. He told them that the Lord would separate the wheat from the chaff—those who loved Him from those who rejected Him and His purpose.

Notice what John said would happen to those who rejected the Lord in that day of judgement. He tells us that the chaff would be burned with unquenchable fire. The term "unquenchable" is significant. John is telling us that the flames of that fire will not go out. John illustrates for us the reality of hell. Those who reject Christ will be thrown into this unquenchable fire whose flames will continue to burn throughout the ages.

In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks about a day of judgment:

(31) When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne, (32) Before him will be gathered all the

nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. (Matthew 25:31-33)

The right hand in Scripture is a place of favour and blessing. The sheep, on His right hand are those who belonged to Christ. The goats on the other hand are those who reject Him and His ways. Notice what the Lord says to the goats on His left hand:

(41) Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41)

Notice how Jesus describes hell in this passage. He describes it as the "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." The word eternal gives us a clear sense that this fire of hell burns forever. Its flames will never be extinguished.

Jesus would go on to say about the goats, who represent those who have rejected Him and His work:

(46) And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25)

Jesus told us in Matthew 25:41 that the flames of hell would be eternal. Here in Matthew 25:46, however, he takes this a step further by saying that the punishment of the goats (those who have rejected Him) will also be eternal. Just as the righteous experience eternal life, so the wicked will experience eternal punishment. It is one thing for the fires of hell to burn forever, but quite another for the wicked to experience eternal punishment in those fires.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus told His listeners that it would be better to tear out their eye than to go to hell. Listen to what Jesus told His listeners that day:

(47) And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, (48) where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:47-48)

Jesus speaks here again of a fire that is not quenched. Notice also, however, that He also speaks of a worm that does not die. The worm spoken of here is the kind of worm that feeds on decay and garbage. Jesus is telling his listeners that this worm will live forever feeding on the decay of hell. This worm will never die because there is a constant supply for it to feed on. Again this teaches us something about the eternal nature of hell and its torment.

Revelation 20:13-14 adds to this when it says:

(13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them and they were judged, each one of them according to what they had done. (14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

Notice how Death and Hades, after being forced to release their dead for judgement, were then cast into the lake of fire. Death would no longer have any authority or power.

Why is the defeat of death significant in the context of this study? If death has been defeated and has no more authority, it can no longer take away life. There will be no more dying. What implication does this have for those who

suffer in hell? If they cannot die, they will live forever under the judgement of God. This is a frightening prospect.

Revelation 20:10 speaks of the judgement of the devil, the prophet and the beast:

(10) And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20)

There can be no doubt about the torment of the devil, the false prophet and the beast. They would be tormented "day and night forever and ever." Death was not a possibility for these individuals. They would live to suffer the consequences of their actions for all eternity.

We have already examined Revelation 9 in another context. The passage speaks of how, when the fifth angel blew his trumpet, the shaft of the bottomless pit was opened. When the pit was opened locusts descended on the earth. Revelation 9:3-6 describe these locusts and their evil power:

(3) Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (5) They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. (6) And in those days people will seek death and will not find

in. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. (Revelation 9)

The locusts of the bottomless pit were not given the power to kill—they could only torment. While people longed to die, death would flee from them. These verses show us that those who have the power to inflict death have been stripped of that power. Death will be cast into the lake of fire and rendered powerless. In those days death would be a great relief but it would no longer take any victims.

Speaking to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul said:

(8)... The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

Paul told the Thessalonian church that those who do not obey the gospel of Christ will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and His might. Since we have already seen that death would no longer be possible, the word destruction cannot mean that these individuals will die and be no more. The passage tells us that they will *suffer* eternal destruction. The dead no longer suffer. Only the living experience suffering. Those who do not obey the gospel will experience a life of eternal destruction and ruin away from the presence of the Lord and separated from His mighty works.

In the verses we have examined, we see that Jesus and the apostles seem to speak of a hell that will be forever. Its flames will be unquenchable. Its worm will never die. Its

punishment will be felt forever. Death will be defeated and no longer able to take life. The torment and punishment of hell will be for ever and ever. Though its inhabitants long for death, it will not come to them.

#### For Consideration:

- What do the passages we have considered in this chapter teach us about the eternal nature of hell?
- Will those who are sentenced to hell experience its torment forever?
- How is death stripped of its power according to the book of Revelation?
- Why do you figure that this truth about hell is not preached about more often?
- How would you answer those who say that hell will not be forever but that those who go to hell will die and be no more?

#### For Prayer:

- Take a moment to reflect on what we have seen in this chapter. Ask the Lord to give you a heart of compassion for those who will experience the reality of hell.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord that He has sent His Son to set those who accept His offer of pardon free from the eternal reality of hell and its torment.
- Thank the Lord for the warnings the Scriptures give to us about hell.
- Take a moment to ask the Lord to open the hearts and minds of those around you who do

not understand the seriousness of hell and its reality.

## 4

# NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS OF HELL

---

The reality of what the New Testament teaches about hell is very difficult. I suspect that words are insufficient to describe this place of eternal torment. The New Testament does, however, attempt to give us a general idea of what hell is like. It does so by means of words and pictures. In the course of this chapter we will examine three New Testament pictures of hell.

### *Fire*

One of the first and most common descriptions of hell in the New Testament is that of fire. Jesus alludes to this in Matthew 5:22 when He says:

(22) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment: whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, "You fool!" will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matthew 5)



Jesus speaks here about the "hell of fire". The word He uses is the Greek word "*gehenna*," which we examined in the first chapter. The word "*gehenna*" refers to the Valley of Hinnom where the fires burned continuously, consuming the garbage and decaying carcasses of sacrifices and dead animals.

In Matthew 13:40 Jesus, speaking to His disciples, told them:

(40) Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. (Matthew 13)

Jesus describes a great fire at the end of the age where weeds are burned with fire. The weeds are those who have not borne spiritual fruit—those who have never come to know the Lord Jesus or received His forgiveness. These individuals will be burned with fire. Jesus explains this in the next two verses of Matthew 13 when He says:

(41) The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, (42) and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13)

Notice again the reference to the fiery furnace where law-breakers are thrown. This fiery furnace will be a place of great suffering described by Jesus in the words "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Describing the judgement of the last days, Jesus said:

(41) Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25)

When Jesus returns He will gather the nations before Him and separate "people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). Those on His left will be sent into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Notice once again that the fire described here is an "eternal" fire that will never go out. It will burn through all eternity judging sin and evil. A fire that never goes out is a fire that always has fuel.

The writer of Hebrews describes hell as a fire when he said:

(26) For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10)

The writer describes the fire of hell as a consuming fire of fury. These flames are furious flames full of judgement. In verse 27 he makes it clear that those who are judged and found guilty ought to be fearful of these flames.

We read in Jude 1:6-7:

(6) And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day – (7) Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality

and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 1)

In Genesis 19:23-29 we read how God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining fire and sulphur on them. Jude tells us that this was a picture of the judgement to come. Notice, however, that while the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah consumed and went out, the fire Jude speaks of here is a "punishment of eternal fire".

Jude would go on in his epistle to challenge his readers:

(22) And have mercy on those who doubt; (23) save others by snatching them out of the fire...

Jude calls us to be instruments of God to rescue those who are destined for the fire of God's judgement.

Finally, Revelation 20:15 says:

(15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

The imagery of a lake of fire is a powerful one. This is not a campfire lighting up the evening sky but an entire environment engulfed in fire and flames. Those thrown into this lake are immersed in the very flames of that fire.

The flames of this eternal fire torment the devil and his angels day and night:

(20) And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the

beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 2)

The New Testament describes hell as a place of furious and consuming fire where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Those thrown into it will experience the torment of its eternal flames.

### *Darkness*

A second description of hell found in the New Testament is that of darkness. We read for example in Matthew 8:11-12:

(11) I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, (12) while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8)

Notice that this place of darkness will be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The darkness described here is an "outer" darkness. The idea is that this is the kind of darkness that is only found in the outer limits, as far removed from any source of light as possible. It is the darkest form of darkness. This phrase "outer darkness" appears only in the gospel of Matthew (see also Matthew 22:13 and 25:30).

The apostle Peter, however, uses a similar illustration in 2 Peter 2:4 when he says:

(4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment... (2 Peter 2)

Peter uses the expression "gloomy darkness" to describe hell. The word Peter uses here for hell is the word "*tartaros*" referring to the deepest pit of hell. The term gloomy carries with it a sense of despair and helplessness.

These passages speak of a place of complete darkness. This is a darkness of despair and helplessness. It is darkness so deep it causes fear and gnashing of teeth. All hope of ever seeing light again is gone. As one who has suffered from depression, this concept suggests to me a sense of hopelessness. Those who have suffered from any form of depression often compare it to a deep darkness where there is no sign of light, hope, or help of any kind. It is a place of despair where all reason to live is gone. It is a place where there is no encouragement, support or blessing of any kind. It is a dark place of agony, hopelessness and fear.

### *Bottomless Pit*

There is one final New Testament illustration I would like to consider in this chapter. The book of Revelation refers to hell as a bottomless pit. Let's look again at Revelation 9:1-2:

(1) And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. (2) He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from

the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. (Revelation 9)

Hell is described in terms of both fire and darkness. One of the questions we ask ourselves is this. If hell is described as a fire which gives light, how can it also be compared to deep darkness? The answer is found for us here in Revelation 9. When the shaft of this bottomless pit is opened, smoke rose from the pit sufficient enough to hide the light of the sun. We have in Revelation an illustration of fire with smoke so thick it blocks the light. All of this rose from what is called a bottomless pit.

Revelation 9:11 tells us more about this bottomless pit:

(11) They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek he is called Apollyon. (Revelation 9)

In that pit an angel lived whose name was Abaddon in Hebrew or Apollyon in Greek. Abaddon in Hebrew means "destruction." Apollyon in Greek means "destroyer." This name is significant to tell us something about this bottomless pit. It is ruled by a destroying angel.

Let's take a moment to consider this illustration of a bottomless pit. There is no bottom to this pit. This means that when someone is thrown into it he or she continues to plunge deeper and deeper into its depths. With each passing moment the individual plummets farther and farther away from the surface and from all hope. The picture of a bottomless pit gives us a sense of things plunging deeper and deeper into hopelessness, despair and darkness. Things do not improve in hell. If there were a bottom to this pit, there might be hope that things would stabilise and not

get any worse but this is not the case. We have the sense that with each passing moment its inhabitants are dragged farther from God, and deeper into evil and despair.

The New Testament pictures hell as a place of eternal furious fire, a place so dark that all light of God is removed and a place so deep that those cast into it, plunge farther and farther into its despair and evil. Words and illustrations do not describe adequately the reality of this place but they are sufficient to warn us of the great danger that lies ahead for those who turn their back on the only hope we have of escape—the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the cross of Calvary.

#### For Consideration:

- Hell is described as an eternal fire. What does this illustration teach us about hell and its conditions?
- Hell is also described as a deep darkness. What does this teach us about the nature of hell? What does this darkness of hell teach us about the conditions of hell?
- The book of Revelation speaks of hell as a bottomless pit. What does the fact that it has no bottom imply to you? What does this teach us about the conditions of hell?
- Take a short moment to reflect on the three illustrations we have examined in this chapter. How would you summarize what hell is like?

## For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to accept more fully the teaching of Jesus and the apostles about hell as a place of eternal fire and darkness.
- Ask God to give you a deeper compassion for those who have refused His offer of forgiveness.
- Take a moment to recognize that hell was your destiny until the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to you. Thank the Lord for rescuing you. Ask Him to enable you to be His instrument to snatch others from the flames and darkness of hell.





## 5

# THE INHABITANTS OF HELL

---

In this study of the New Testament teaching about hell, it is important that we examine one other prominent theme. Jesus and the apostles speak in numerous places about the inhabitants of this place of eternal fire. Let us now take a moment to examine what they tell us about the inhabitants of hell.

### *Those who do not Know God or Obey the Gospel*

The first group who will be in hell is referred to in Scripture as those who "do not know God or obey the gospel." Listen to what Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:

(7) ... the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (8) in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thessalonians 1)

There are two groups of people referred to here by the apostle. First, there are those who do not know God. Second, there are those who have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord.

In Romans 1:18-20 the apostle Paul said:

(18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) for his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Paul makes it quite clear that creation shows us that there is a God. Not only does creation show us there is a God but it also shows us something of His character and attributes. God reveals Himself to all His creation through His works and actions on the earth. Paul's reference in 2 Thessalonians to those who do not know God is to those who have never taken the time to get to know Him as their Creator and God. He speaks about those who have "by their unrighteousness suppressed the truth (Romans 1:19). In other words, they have chosen to ignore the truth of the existence of God and their lives as they please.

The second group in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 is referred to as those who do not obey the gospel. Could it be that these individuals have not only had creation as their witness but also the message of the gospel that has been preached to them? They have not only turned their back on the truth of God in creation but they have also rejected the person and

work of the Son of God as proclaimed in the gospel. Both those who have heard the message of the Gospel and those who have not heard are guilty. Those who have heard are guilty because they have rejected the message they heard and those who have never heard are guilty because they have rejected the knowledge of God as revealed to them in creation.

The first inhabitants of hell are those who have rejected God. These are people who have chosen to turn their backs on God and His Word to live their own way. They want nothing of God or His plan of salvation. They do not want to be governed by God. They are proud people who have chosen to ignore the call of God.

*Those who Refuse To Be Changed By the Gospel*

Listen to what the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 10:26-27:

(26) For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10)

Those who deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth will be judged by the fury of God's fire. This refers to those who have heard the truth of the gospel and have chosen instead to remain in their sin. They may have even understood the truth of the gospel, but they did not allow that truth to change their hearts or their actions. They have refused to surrender to Christ despite their knowledge of His way.

The apostle John speaks of this when he says in Revelation 21:8:

(8) But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (Revelation 21)

The list John gives in Revelation 21:8 is a list of those who have never allowed the message of the gospel of forgiveness through Jesus Christ to change their lives. They have refused the gospel, and have deliberately chosen to continue in their sinful ways. These inhabitants of hell are proud and evil. They have refused to change or leave their evil ways. Instead, they are governed by their lusts and evil desires.

### *The Unfruitful*

John the Baptist used an illustration to present the ministry of the Lord Jesus to those who had come to be baptised. Listen to what he tells those listening to him in Matthew 3:12:

(12) His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3)

John compares these people to chaff. The chaff was what was left over after the grain was separated. This chaff was useless for anything. While the wheat was stored in the barn, the chaff was burned with unquenchable fire. The chaff speaks of those whose lives have been unfruitful and

unproductive for the Lord. These individuals, says John, will be cast into the unquenchable fire.

Jesus would say the same thing in Matthew 7:19:

(19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 7)

He repeats this in Matthew 13:40 where is says:

(40) Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. (Matthew 13)

Jesus speaks about weeds and fruitless trees. There is growth of a sort in fruitless trees and weeds, but not the kind of growth that the Lord Jesus is seeking. The fruit Jesus seeks is a work of His Spirit in our lives. The only way this kind of fruit can be produced in the life of an individual is through a close connection with the Lord Jesus.

(6) If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. (John 15)

There is a difference between human religious effort and spiritual fruit. Human beings can discipline themselves to be religious, but only those who abide in Christ can produce the fruit Jesus speaks about here. The unfaithful Jesus speaks about here fall into two groups. First, there are those who have no desire to follow him and live sinful lives governed by their own lusts and desires. Second, there are those who may attempt to do good things, but have no

connection with the Lord Jesus, nor are they dependent on His Spirit to lead and empower.

Hell will be populated with people who have chosen to do things their own way; people who have never submitted to the Lordship of Christ or surrendered to the work of His Spirit in their lives.

### *The Religious*

This leads us to the next group of people who will populate hell. Jesus, in particular speaks of this group. Listen to what He said about the Pharisees and scribes, the religious leaders of His day:

(15) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. (Matthew 23)

He would go on in this same chapter to address these religious leaders by saying:

(33) You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? (Matthew 23)

Speaking about the religious Jews of His day the Lord would say:

(11) I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, (12) while the sons

of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8)

Notice here that "the sons of the kingdom" would be thrown into the outer darkness. The phrase "sons of the kingdom" refers to those who were religious but who were not in a right relationship with God. They contented themselves with their traditions and customs, but did not truly know God or honour Him in their hearts and lives. Their faith was an outward show, but they were not in a relationship with their Creator.

Jesus teaches us that there will be many religious people in hell. These individuals are strong on tradition, customs and practices, but have never received the forgiveness offered by the Lord Jesus. In fact, many of them believe they are good enough to make it to heaven on their own. They pride themselves in their good works and religious practices but they will be surprised when the doors of heaven are barred to them, for they have refused to realize that all their "righteous" acts were insufficient to cleanse them of their sin.

### *The Beast and the False Prophet*

Revelation 11:7 tells us that a great beast rose from the bottomless pit to make war on the two servants of God who will witness in the last days. This beast would kill these witnesses and leave their bodies to lie in the street.

In Revelation 17, the apostle John saw a great scarlet beast with a woman riding on him. This beast was full of blasphemous names. The woman he carried on his back carried with her a golden cup full of abominations and sexual impurities. This woman was drunk with the blood of



"the martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6). John tells us in Revelation 17:8 that this beast was also from the bottomless pit:

(8) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. (Revelation 17)

The beast spoken of here did much damage on the earth. He stood against God and waged war on those who loved His name. Listen to what John tells us will happen to this great beast:

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.  
20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (Revelation 19:19-20)

There in the flames of hell will be found the great beast who blasphemed the name of the Lord God and who fought against the saints of Jesus, seeking to destroy them.

### *Demons and Satan*

In Matthew 25, Jesus was teaching about the coming judgement. He told those listening to Him that in the day of judgement the sheep would be separated from the goats. The sheep would be placed at the right hand of favour, while the goats would be placed to His left.

(41) Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25)

What is important for us to note here is that Jesus tells us that this eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. This being the case, they too, will be inhabitants of hell.

Peter tells us:

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment. (2 Peter 2:4)

Notice again that Peter tells us that God cast the angels who sinned (demons) into hell where they were committed to chains of gloomy darkness. Hell will be filled with demons.

The apostle John describes the day when Satan would be captured and cast into the lake of fire:

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

Satan and all his demons will be in hell tormented day and night forever and ever. There in that lake of fire the screams of their agony will also be heard.

*Death and Hades*

The final inhabitants of hell are described in Revelation 20:14:

(14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

Death and Hades were great enemies. They would be rendered powerless. The gates to this lake of fire would be closed for all eternity. Never again would death or the grave have any impact. There in hell, death and the grave would lament their powerlessness. Those who suffered the torment of hell would look to them for relief but find none. Death, the great saviour of the inhabitants of hell would be powerless and unable to satisfy its thirst or ease the suffering of hell's victims.

Someone once said, "If the flames of hell do not scare you, think of those you will be living with." Please don't misunderstand what I am saying here. This is not meant to be a joke. In fact, it is not funny at all. It is a very sobering and fearful thought. There in the eternal flames of hell we find men and women who have turned their back on God. They are a proud and rebellious people filled with selfishness and greed, given to satisfying their own lusts and no longer governed by principles of godliness. With them is the beast and the false prophet filled with blasphemy and hatred for all that is godly. Beside them stand Satan and his demons with all their vulgarity, immorality, blasphemy and hatred for God. Finally, death rendered powerless, sits helplessly in the corner unable to relieve the sufferings and torment of eternity.

## For Consideration:

- What kind of people will inhabit hell?
- What is the difference between being religious and bearing fruit for the kingdom of God? Can we serve the Lord and not belong to Him?
- What would it be like to live in the presence of the Beast of Revelation, Satan and his demons?
- Why do you suppose the teaching of Scripture about hell is so difficult for even Christians to understand? Does our lack of understanding change the reality of what these Scriptures teach?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to accept what He teaches us in the passages of Scripture we have examined here. Take a moment to thank Him for the victory of Christ over hell.
- Ask God to give you the assurance that you have escaped the torments of hell through the work of Christ on your behalf.
- Ask God to give you grace to live for Him and serve Him out of gratitude for what He has done for you in forgiving you and changing your destiny.



## 6

# THE POWER OF CHRIST OVER HELL

---

This study would not be complete if we did not take a moment to examine the power of the Lord Jesus Christ over hell. As we begin this final chapter, let me quote Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:18:

(18) And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 18)

This is a very important passage of Scripture because of what it tells us about hell and the power of Christ over it. Jesus told Peter that He (Jesus) was going to build His church and that not even the power of hell could prevail against it. This is the promise of the Lord Jesus to those who belong to Him. Satan has no ultimate power over them. Let me take a moment to examine this statement in greater detail.

*The Work of Christ is Sufficient for our Salvation*

Jesus told Peter that the gates of hell could not prevail against the church He was going to build. As we consider what Jesus meant by this, the first thing we need to understand is that Jesus came to die so that we could be forgiven of the sin and rebellion that sentenced us to an eternity in hell.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 10:27-29:

(27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (29) My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10)

What is important for us to note in this statement of Jesus is that He gives His sheep eternal life. Not only does He give them this gift of eternal life but He goes on to tell us that no one can snatch them from His hands. The Father is greater than all forces of earth and hell. No one can take those who belong to Him from Him. The Father keeps and protects those who belong to Him. Hell itself is not powerful enough to rip us from His powerful hands.

The apostle Paul told the Romans that if Jesus justified them (placed them in a right standing with the Father) than no one could condemn them:

(33) Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (35) Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (Romans 8)

The apostle makes it quite clear in Romans 8:1 that there is no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus:

(1) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8)

This is a powerful truth. All condemnation is gone for those who have received the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus. The forgiveness of Christ sets us free from the power of hell.

(16) For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3)

Jesus makes it clear in this passage that those who believe in Him (put their trust and confidence in His work) will not perish but have eternal life. The salvation Jesus offers is a salvation from the eternal judgement of hell. The writer of Hebrews tells us that this salvation is a complete and perfect salvation:

(23) The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, (24) but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. (25) Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:23-25)



Jesus saves to the uttermost. The salvation of Jesus is absolutely complete and sure. There could be nothing more sure than this salvation. It sets us free from the power of hell and brings us into the presence of God where we will live forever in His forgiveness.

The clear teaching of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ came to offer us victory over sin, death and hell. Only in Him is this forgiveness possible. Those who draw near to Him and receive His forgiveness are saved to the uttermost. The gates of hell will have no authority over them.

### *Satan and his Demons are Subject to Christ*

We have seen that the gates of hell cannot prevail against those who belong to Christ because the work of Jesus is sufficient to completely save them from hell. There is another important point we need to make here. The gates of hell cannot prevail against those who belong to Christ because Satan and his demons are ultimately subject to Christ and have no power over Him.

From the very beginning of Jesus' life as a man, Satan did his best to destroy the work that God was doing in sending His Son to earth. He attempted to kill Jesus through Herod when He was a baby. He caused the religious leaders of the day to persuade the people to resist His teaching. He entered one of His disciples and used him to betray Jesus so He would be killed. He caused Peter to deny Jesus and all the other disciples to run away from Him in His hour of need. In Luke 4:1-13 Satan tempted the Lord Jesus, seeking to distract Him from His mission on this earth. Despite these many efforts of Satan, Jesus overcame. Even in His death He overcame the power of Satan and destroyed his

hold on the lives of countless men and woman who would come to Him for salvation and forgiveness.

The apostle Paul said:

(8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2)

Notice that because Christ Jesus overcame, God exalted Him and gave Him a name that was over every name. This name is not just a word; it is a position of authority and power. That power and authority is over every power in heaven, earth and under the earth. The phrase "under the earth" is a reference to Hades and hell. The authority of Christ is greater than all the powers of hell. Hell has no authority over Christ. He has conquered its power and offers pardon to those who will come to Him.

In His ministry on earth we see how even the demons of hell feared Christ. Jesus set people free from the power of evil spirits who troubled them (see Matthew 4:24; 8:16; 8:28; 10:8). All the great enemies of hell are subject to Christ. The Beast and the False Prophet of Revelation were thrown into the lake of fire, as was Satan (see Revelation 20:10). Death and the grave were also cast into that same lake (Revelation 20:13-14). In fact, Revelation 1:18 tells us that Jesus now holds the keys of death and hell. He who holds the keys has authority over death and hell.

Satan, the demons of hell, the beast of the bottomless pit and his prophet are subject to the greater power and authority of Christ. He will judge them and lock them in the pit of hell forever. The Lord Jesus has authority over hell and all its forces. He alone is able to conquer. He alone is our security and guarantee of victory over its flames.

*Those who are in Christ have Power over Hell*

There is one final point we need to make in this reflection. The Lord Jesus, who has power and authority over hell, has extended His authority and protection to all who belong to Him. Those who are in Christ, have power over hell.

We have already examined what Paul told us about nothing being able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-37). We can be confident in the love of God for us as His children. Beyond this, however, we need to understand that God has given us the tools necessary to withstand the temptations of Satan and his demons.

In Mark 3:14-15 Jesus chose twelve apostles to be with Him in His ministry. Notice what Mark tells us about these apostles:

(14) And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach (15) and to have authority to cast out demons. (Mark 3)

The power of Christ over the demonic forces of hell was given to His apostles. In Christ they had the authority to drive these evil spirits out of those they troubled.

Later in his ministry the Lord appointed seventy-two other disciples to go in His name. They came back to Jesus after a time of ministry and said: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Luke 10:17). As those who belong to Jesus today, we walk in His authority. In Him we are given authority over these evil forces.

Not only did Christ extend His authority over the demons of hell to those who belong to Him, but he also equipped His people to stand firm against the attacks of hell. In Ephesians 6:11-12 the apostle Paul reminds us that as believers our battle is not against people but against the forces of hell. He challenges us, therefore, to put on the whole armour of God:

(11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6)

Paul would go on in this passage to describe how Christians were to equip themselves to stand firm against the "flaming darts of the evil one." (Ephesians 6:17). God has given us the armor necessary to protect us from the devil. In fact, the apostle James tells us that if we submit to God and resist the devil he will flee from us:

(7) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4)

The apostle Peter warns his readers that the devil was prowling around seeking to devour. Listen to Peter's advice in 1 Peter 5:8-10:

(8) Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (9) Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (10) And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Peter makes it clear that the forces of hell will do their utmost to attack those who belong to Christ. James tells his readers to resist Satan and God will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish them. He could not have given this command if believers did not have the power to resist Satan. The fact that he tells us to resist, shows us that we have been given not only the authority but also the power in Christ to stand up against the forces of hell and hold them off.

What do these verses teach us? They teach us that Christ has power over hell and that He extends this power and authority to all who will trust in Him and His forgiveness. Christ is the victory over hell. His death brings forgiveness and pardon. His life in us gives us authority to resist the forces of hell. In Him and in Him alone, there is complete salvation from hell and complete victory over its temptations and power.

## For Consideration:

- How does the work of Christ set us free from hell? Have you experienced the reality of this work in your personal life?
- How did Satan attempt to destroy the work of Christ when Jesus was on this earth? Was he successful?
- How does Christ demonstrate His power and authority over the forces of hell in the New Testament?
- What does the New Testament teach us about the authority of those who belong to Christ over the forces of hell? How are we to resist Satan? Have you ever had to resist the temptations of Satan?
- Apart from Christ, could we ever expect to have any authority or victory over hell?

## For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to give you the assurance that you have victory over hell because of what He has done on your behalf.
- Thank the Lord that He has saved you completely and that His salvation gives you perfect and complete victory over sin and hell.
- Ask the Lord to give you grace to put on the armour He provides so that you will be able to resist the devil and the forces of hell.
- Ask the Lord for forgiveness for any time you have failed to resist the devil. Ask God to forgive you and give you grace to learn how to resist in His strength.



## Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

To date tens of thousands of books are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. Books have now been translated into a number of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources necessary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation and further distribution of these books?

For more information about Light To My Path Book Distribution visit our website at <http://ltmp-homepage.blogspot.ca>