

What is Hell Really Like?

Luke 16:19-31

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Today I shall speak to you on what I think is one of the most serious topics in all of God’s Word. The lesson is entitled very simply, “What is Hell Really Like?”
- B. Before reading the lesson text, let me say that in this lesson I will make no distinction between the waiting place for the unrighteous dead and Hell itself. As far as I can see, there is no difference between the two except that one is limited to time and the other is in eternity.
- C. **Luke 16:19-31** – “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.
20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,
21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.
23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
24 “Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'
25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.
26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'
27 “Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,
28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'
29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'
30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'
31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

- D. I have read that passage to you in your hearing not because I intend to elaborate upon it to any extent, but I have read it to set before you three facts:
1. Number one: Two men lived.
 2. Number two: Two men died.
 3. Number three: The situation of those two men in the next life was exactly the opposite of what it had been in this life.
 - a. The rich man on earth became the beggar in Hell.
 - b. The poor man on earth became the rich man in paradise.
 - c. The rich man here was clothed in purple and fine linen.
 - d. In the next life he was robed in a garment of fire.
 - e. The poor man was attended by dogs here, but in the next life he was attended by the angels of God.
 - f. The rich man here fared sumptuously every day, but in the next life he couldn't get so much as a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue.
 - g. The poor man here suffered evil things, but in the next life he was comforted.

HELL IS ETERNAL

- A. First of all, by way of answering this question, I submit to you that Hell is eternal.
- B. Please note these passages:
1. In **Matthew 24:46**, our Lord said, “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”
 2. In **Romans 16:26**, Paul described God as “the everlasting God.”
 3. In **Hebrews 9:14**, we read of “the eternal Spirit.”
- C. We have before us three passages and four expressions in those three passages which must be considered. Here they are:
1. “Everlasting punishment.”
 2. “Eternal Life”
 3. “Everlasting God”
 4. “Eternal Spirit.”
- D. The only difference between the words “everlasting” and “eternal” in the English language is a difference in spelling.
1. They mean exactly the same thing.
 2. The word translated “everlasting” or “eternal” in these three passages is a form of the same Greek word in the original text of the Bible.
 3. That word in the original language is “aionios” (ah-on-knee-ose)
 4. “Aionios” means:
 - a. “Eternal”
 - b. “Everlasting”
 - c. “Without end”

- d. “Never to cease”
- e. “Indeterminate as to duration”

- E. My friends, there is not one single solitary argument a man can make against the Bible doctrine of Hell which cannot be applied with equal force against the Bible doctrine of Heaven. Let me explain.
1. For example, if a man takes the position that Hell is going to last for only 1,000 years, then at the end of that period those who are in Heaven will cease to be blessed. How do I know? Because the same word used to modify Hell’s punishment is used also to qualify the bliss and happiness of Heaven.
 2. If Hell is going to last only 1000 years, then Heaven is going to last only 1000 years.
 3. When the wicked cease to be punished in Hell, at that moment God and the Holy Spirit will go out of existence. The same word is used to describe both.
 4. How long, then, is the punishment going to last in Hell? It’s going to last forever, eternally, or everlastingly. The punishment will continue forever and ever and ever . . . And ever.
- F. There are people who argue against that position.
1. They say this is too long.
 2. They argue that it isn’t right to take a man who has lived in disobedience five years and punish him forever.
 3. Well, if it is wrong to take a man who has been disobedient for five years and punish him forever, then its wrong to take a man who has lived five years in obedience and bless him forever.
 4. And if not . . . Why not?
- G. How do you determine the enormity of an act? By the time it takes to perpetrate it or by the act itself?
1. Let me illustrate: Six shooter – could kill 3 or 4 people before I could be reached and subdued. Approximately 30 seconds of commotion. How long should I be punished?
 - a. Should I be punished in the penitentiary for thirty seconds?
 - b. Let’s double it. Should I be put in the penitentiary for sixty seconds.
 - c. Let’s triple it and I would go to prison for ninety seconds.
 - d. Quadruple it and I would go 120 seconds.
 2. Would that satisfy the demands of justice? Certainly not! If I escaped the death penalty, the least I would get would be the rest of my natural life behind bars.
 3. Would that be right to put me behind bars for the rest of my life for something that took me only thirty seconds to do?
 4. The most horrible thing can anyone can do is live in rebellion to God’s will. Live five years, five months, or five weeks in stubborn rebellion and

disobedience to God, die in that condition, and you will be punished in Hell forever.

H. Somebody says “Hell is too ugly.” If Hell is too ugly, then Heaven is too beautiful, for Heaven is on the one hand what Hell is on the other.

HELL IS A PLACE OF DARKNESS

- A. Second of all, in answering the question, “What is Hell Really Like?”, I submit to you that Hell is a place of darkness.
- B. Please note these passages:
1. **2 Peter 2:4** states that “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.”
 2. In **Jude 13** the writer, in describing false teachers, said” . . . For whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”
 3. In **Matthew 25:30**, a man, in dealing with his unprofitable servant said, “And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- C. Put those three passages together and the figure intensifies itself.
1. Not simply “darkness” but the “blackness of darkness.”
 2. Not simply the “blackness of darkness” but “outer darkness.”
- D. The last expression, “outer darkness” seems to suggest that Hell is the place farthest removed from the source of light.
- E. Why is Hell dark?
1. Consider this:
 - a. **James 1:17** states that God is the “Father of lights.”
 - b. **1 John 1:17** says, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”
 - c. God is not in Hell!
 2. **2 Thessalonians 1:1-9** – “And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”
 3. God is not in the place of everlasting destruction.
 - a. There won’t be any God to listen to you scream and beg for mercy. None will be granted because God will not be there.
 - b. Since God is the source of all light, where He is not must be the place of “outer darkness.”
- F. A lot of people do not particularly like darkness.
1. Children fear darkness.
 - a. Night lights

- b. Leave the door cracked so some of the light from the hallway can come in.
2. Harder for an elderly person to suffer through long hours of darkness than when it is light.
3. When we are sick or in a hospital, the suffering seems more intense during the night than during the day.
4. Larry and me going to the movies. Running those last two blocks. Did not scare me in the daytime.

HELL IS A PLACE OF FIRE

- A. Thirdly, in answering the question, “What is Hell Really Like?”, Hell is a place of fire.
- B. Note these passages:
1. In **Matthew 13:42**, Hell is described as a “furnace of fire.”
 2. In **Mark 9:44-45** – “The fire is not quenched.”
 3. In **Revelation 20:10** – “Fire and brimstone.”
 4. In **Revelation 20:15** – “The lake of fire.”
- C. Question: How do you reconcile the idea of having darkness and fire in the same place at the same time?
1. Fire dispels darkness . . . Doe it not?
 2. How can there be fire in Hell and darkness too?
 3. Well really, there is no problem here.
 - a. Man has created a fire that does not illuminate.
 - b. If man can, God can!
 - c. God created a special fire in Exodus 3. Bush burned but not consumed. If God can create a special fire there, He can do it for eternity.
- D. Some think that Biblical writers used the word “fire” as a metaphor. What is a metaphor? It is a likeness or similarity set forth as a reality. For example:
1. Jesus said, “I am the door.” He didn’t mean He was a literal door, but he meant He was like a door.
 2. He said, “I am the vine.” He didn’t mean He was a literal vine, but that He was like a vine.
 3. He said, “I am the good shepherd.” He meant He was like the good shepherd.
 4. On one occasion He described Herod Antipas as a fox. He didn’t mean that Herod was a literal fox, but rather that he was like one.
- E. Metaphors are found repeatedly in God’s Word.
1. Remember that God is an infinite God and Hell is an infinite place, but we are finite creatures.
 2. God is attempting to describe to us what cannot be described.

3. God has to say that Hell is like this or that.
4. We frequently use analogies.
 - a. Subway – mole.
 - b. Sky scraper – Silo.
 - c. Airplane – bird.
- F. The Biblical description of Hell is God’s way of telling us that Hell is far worse than anything we’ve ever experienced. The nearest things to it in human experience is that of a burn.
 1. If you want to know something of what Hell is like, strike a match and hold it to your finger.
 2. Or, when you get home turn up the oven to 500 degrees and let it heat up for about ten minutes and then put your hand in and leave it for a while.
 3. Fish fry and pot of hot grease.
- G. Brother Marshal Keeble, outstanding Black evangelist some years ago, departed this life on April 20, 1968. During the course of his illustrious ministry, Bro. Keeble once said that man could build the hottest fire possible, removed the damned from Hell, place them in the man-made fire and in ten seconds they would freeze to death.
- H. My friends, if Hell is just one-tenth as bad as the description found in the Bible, that should be enough to produce fear in the heart of anyone.
- I. That’s why in **Revelation 14:11** the Bible says, ‘The smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever.’

HELL IS A PLACE OF PAIN

- A. Fourth, in answering the question, “What is Hell Really Like?”, Hell is a place of pain.
- B. In **Matthew 25:30** Jesus in describing the punishment of the one talent man, said”. . . There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- C. When individuals undergo great pain, severe pain, they weep and grit their teeth. They can hardly bear it, and that’s what our Lord was saying.

THERE IS NO REST IN HELL

- A. Fifthly, in answering the question, “What is Hell Really Like?”, Hell is a place where there is no rest.
- B. Hear God’s Word.
 1. **Revelation 14:11** – “. . . And they shall have no rest day nor night.”
 2. **Revelation 20:10** – “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

- C. Isn't it enjoyable to go home when you are completely worn out, take your shoes off and prop down in a comfortable chair and begin to totally relax. Or, better yet, to fall across the bed and into the oblivion of sleep.
- D. Rest is wonderful when you're tired, but how horrible to be perpetually exhausted and have no opportunity to rest. Hell is such a place.

THERE IS NO RELIEF IN HELL

- A. Sixth, in answering the question, “What is Hell really like?, Hell is a place where there is no relief.
- B. The rich man in Luke 16:23-24 wanted a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue, but he didn't get it.
- C. Robert Ingersol, an infamous skeptic around the turn of the 20th century, said that had he been present, he would have given that man some water.
 - 1. There is one item Mr. Ingersol overlooked . . . The rich man did not have to be there.
 - 2. He could have received ten million gallons of the water of God's salvation in this life, but he neglected his opportunity and finally wound up in torment without water.
- D. You can stay out of Hell, my friend, but if you ever get in, you can never get out. And there will be no relief for you in that horrible place.

THERE IS NO HOPE IN HELL

- A. In the seventh place, by way of answering the question, “What is Hell Really Like?”, Hell is a place where there is no hope . . . Absolutely none whatsoever.
- B. The rich man wanted a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue . . . Bu he didn't get it.
- C. “How long is eternity?”
 - 1. Those of us who preach can't eve discuss it sensibly.
 - 2. You can't **spend** eternity.
 - a. You can spend a dollar, but you can't spend eternity.
 - b. If you could spend eternity, that would imply that it has an end . . . And it doesn't.
 - 3. Some place . . . We will maintain an existence even after death.
- D. Again I ask, “How long is eternity?”
 - 1. World made of solid steel. Ant traveling at the rapid rate of 1/17th of a mile an hour.
 - a. How long would it take that ant to wear down a half inch deep?
 - b. How long to completely wear the earth in half?
 - c. I don't know, but it would be far less than eternity.

2. If the planet earth was made of wood, how long would it take one termite to completely consume it?
 3. A 50 gallon drum for every blade of grass, every tree leaf, and every grain of sand in the world. A spigot that releases one drop of water once every ten billion years.
 - a. How long would it take to completely fill every single one of those 50 gallon drums?
 - b. I don't know, but it would be far less than eternity.
- D. Hell is a place with no hope of getting out.
1. If Hell lasted only 100 years, I could stand it.
 - a. After I had been there one day, I could say, “I have 99 years, 364 days and I'll get out of this place.”
 - b. I would have hope.
 2. If Hell lasted only 1000 years, I could bear that.
 - a. After a day in torment, I could say, “Just 999 years, 364 more days and I'll get out.
 - c. I would have hope.
 3. If Hell lasted a million years, I could bear that.
 - a. After a couple of days there I could say, 999,999 years and 363 more days and I'll get out.”
 - b. I would have hope.
- E. Listening friends, after a man has been in Hell a hundred thousand million, billion, trillion years, he has no less time to stay.
1. Why?
 2. Answer: Because the Bible speaks of everlasting punishment, and everlasting punishment is punishment that lasts forever.
- F. Dante, in his famous poem, “The Inferno,” said the sign hanging over Hell's door ought to be “Thou Who Enter This Door Leave All Hope Behind.”
- G. Hell is a hopeless and helpless place.
- H. What do you see when you look at a person?
1. How do you consider that individual?
 - a. Black?
 - b. White?
 - c. Rich?
 - d. Poor?
 - e. Big?
 - f. Little?
 - g. Educated?
 - h. Uneducated?
 - i. Etc.
 2. We ought to see an individual as:
 - a. One made in the image of God.
 - b. One for whom Jesus died.
 - c. One who will live in the presence of god in Heaven or burn in the fires of Hell for all eternity.

- I. How many people do you know that have died this year without Christ?
 1. How many loved ones?
 2. How many relatives?
 3. How many friends?
 4. How many did you try to reach with the gospel?

HELL IS A PLACE WHERE MAN RETAINS HIS MENTAL FACULTIES

- A. Eight, in answering the question, “What is Hell Really Like?”, Hell is a place where man retains his mental faculties.
- B. After the rich man died, he could see, feel, hear, talk, and remember. **Luke 16:25** – “But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.”
 1. Furthermore, he remembered his five brethren who were still alive on this earth, and he wanted them to be warned.
 2. If he could remember his five brothers and the good things he experienced before he died, I have reason to believe that he could remember the times he neglected to do the Lord’s will.
- C. If you lose your soul and wake up in torment, one of the horrible things about it will be a haunting memory to plague you.
 1. You will think:
 - a. “If I had only listened to the pleading of my wife.”
 - b. “If I had only listened to the pleading of my husband.”
 - c. “If I had only listened when Christians came to my house and begged me to obey the Lord’s Will.
 - d. “If I had only answered the invitation that day/night in _____.
Yes, you will say “If, if, if” but it won’t change your situation.
 2. Memory will haunt you because you will know that Hell could have been avoided.

HELL IS WORSE FOR SOME THAN OTHERS

- A. I believe in degrees of punishment. Why? For two reasons:
 1. It is reasonable.
 2. It is scriptural.
- B. If a an perpetrates a premeditated crime, he is punished more severely tan the man who commits a crime of passion.
 1. Of course, a crime of passion is never planned.
 2. There are degrees of guilt under our system of criminal jurisprudence. It appears to be so under the system of God.

C. **Matthew 11:21-24** – “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

1. Our Lord taught that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for some than for others.

2. **Luke 12:47-48** - “And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

3. Some are going to get many stripes and more are going to get few stripes.

D. Listening friends, if I had to pick a place now from which to depart this old world unprepared to meet Christ, it wouldn't be _____.

1. I'd rather die an African savage who'd never heard about Jesus than to die in your unprepared condition.

2. You and I have no reason for refusing Christ. If we lose our souls, we'll get the most severe punishment God can place upon us.

HELL IS A PLACE OF DIVIDED FAMILIES

A. Finally, Hell is a place of divided families.

B. When we think about our families, a lot of us are overcome with sentimentalism . . . And rightly so.

1. “Perhaps many present will remember the following words from an old hymn: “Will the circle be unbroken, by and by, Lord, by and by, is there a better home awaiting in the sky, Lord in the sky?”

2. How can we sing “Will the circle be unbroken by and by” when the circle is broken right now?

3. How can we sing about being united in Heaven when we are not united on earth?

C. Some people sing the song, “If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again.”

1. How many of you ever heard your mother pray? You ought to thank God if you had a Christian mother.

2. Sentimentalism aside . . . Be realistic! A person who does not obey the gospel is lost.
- D. Hell is a place of divided families . . . Will your family be one of them?
1. If your family is saved, then your family will go to Heaven.
 2. If your family is lost, then your family will go to Hell.
 3. If some of your family is saved, they will be going to Heaven . . . Thereby leaving the lost members of your family going to Hell.
 4. You need to teach your family the will of God.
- E. Families are going to be divided in eternity because they are already divided on earth.
1. You should want your family to be saved.
 2. Our Lord does not want your family to be a divided family.
 3. Dedicate yourself to taking your family to Heaven.

CONCLUSION:

- A. What is Hell Really Like?
1. Hell is **eternal**.
 2. Hell is a place of **darkness**.
 3. Hell is a place of **fire**.
 4. Hell is a place of **pain**.
 5. **No rest** in Hell.
 6. **No relief** in Hell.
 7. **No hope** in Hell.
 8. In Hell **man retains his mental faculties**.
 9. Hell is **worse for some than others**.
 10. Hell is a place of **divided families**.
- B. Listening friends, I don't really believe that you honestly want to go to such a place as has been described in this lesson.
1. If you have not obeyed the gospel, then you are on your way to Hell.
 2. If you are unfaithful to Christ, then you are on your way to Hell.
 3. Right now, if you should die, then you would be in Hell forever and forever.
 4. The Lord Jesus Christ is saying to every lost person in this audience, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” **Mark 16:16**
 5. The Bible is saying to every erring brother and sister, “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.” **Acts 8:22**
 6. Obey the gospel now!
- C. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**