

# IMAGINE HEAVEN

## What about Hell?



Part 5 of 6

Saturday, 10/17/20 at 4:00 | Sunday, 10/18/20 at 9:00

Truthful ~ Relevant ~ Encouraging

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: Today is part 5 of the series, *Imagine Heaven!* As I am benefitting in many ways from this series, *I want the same for YOU!* For example:

- **STOP** feeling crushed by your sins, and **START** rejoicing in God's full forgiveness through Jesus!
- **STOP** focusing on this life, and **START** focusing on the life to come!
- **STOP** focusing on things, and **START** focusing on people and your relationship with them!
- **STOP** emphasizing yourself, and **START** taking action to make a significant difference in the lives of others!

If you are reading the book, *Imagine Heaven*,<sup>1</sup> you know that most of the accounts are about people experiencing the peace, light, love, and joy of **Heaven**! However, there are some accounts in the book of people experiencing the terror, darkness, hatred, and pain of **Hell**! To get a glimpse into the terror of experiencing the place called Hell, *read pages 48-50!* Think about this old song from 1968, entitled, “And When I Die,” by Blood, Sweat, and Tears; these are some of the lyrics:

**My troubles are many, they're as deep as a well  
I can swear there ain't no heaven but I pray there ain't no hell...  
But I'll never know by living, only my dying will tell...**

Even though many deny the existence of hell, or say its existence is uncertain, we know **from God's word, the Bible** that **HELL CERTAINLY DOES EXIST!** This sermon will:

- ➔ Identify the purpose of Hell!
- ➔ Describe the horrors of Hell!
- ➔ Cause believers to be thankful for Jesus!
- ➔ Move believers to share God's truth with others!

1. **The Purpose of Hell**: When Jesus returns, *this is what He will say to all who have rejected Him: “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41 NAU).* That is why God made that terrible place, *NOT for people, BUT for the devil himself and all the holy angels who followed the devil, and thus became evil angels!*

- a. Evil angels: They were holy; then they rebelled; and now they are doomed for eternity. They wanted to rule, *so they will rule – but in a place of torment!* In reference to Jesus, the Bible says:

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<sup>1</sup> John Burke, *Imagine Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015).

“...surely it is not angels [*evil angels*] that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham [*people with the faith of Abraham*]” (Heb. 2:16 ESV).

- b. All people: Adam and Eve had a choice: **(1)** To gladly obey God – *in response to the countless blessings He had given them* **or** **(2)** to disobey God – *by listening to the Serpent and choosing their will over God’s will*. Sadly, ✦they fell, ✦the consequences are horrible, AND ✦all those negatives have passed on to us and all people.
- c. A major difference: **The evil angels** rebelled and are doomed – *no second chance!* **All people** have inherited sin and death, and have chosen to disobey God countless times – *that includes you and me!* However, God is giving everyone a *lifetime of second chances* to ✦confess their sins and ✦receive Jesus! For those who persistently refuse, or, as C. S. Lewis put it, “**are... successful, rebels to the end,**”<sup>2</sup> *they will forever experience the next section of this sermon* 😞😞😞...

## 2. **Key Words that Describe the Horrors of Hell:**

- a. **Gehenna** (γέενναν) – The term literally refers to the *valley of Hinnom*, which was a ravine south of Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to consume the dead bodies of animals, criminals, and garbage; the term is used in the Gospels and James to identify **Hell**, a fiery place of eternal punishment for the ungodly. Some examples:
  - i. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:  
“...whoever says, ‘You fool,’ [*to someone*]

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 230.

*else] shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell” (Matt. 5:22 NAU).*

- ii. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, who were hypocrites: “...you travel around on sea and land to make one [convert]; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Matt. 23:15 NAU).
- iii. Jesus warned His disciples about the serious nature of sin: “If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell” (Mk. 9:45 NAU).

b. **Hades** (ᾍδου) – A dark (Job 10:21) and dismal place in the very depths of the earth (Job 11:8; Isa. 57:9; Amos 9:2) (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the NT).

Some examples:

- i. The term Hades takes us to Jesus’ account of the rich man and Lazarus: Regarding the rich man, *who was selfish and uncaring during his life on earth*, Jesus said about that man: “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus [was near him]. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame’” (Lk. 16:23-24 NAU). He longed for a single drop of water, *but there is no relief in Hades!*

- ii. Jesus told the reason why people go to Hades: “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you [in the city of Capernaum], [Sodom] would have remained to this day” (Matthew 11:23 NAS). What was their problem? They did not repent; *they did not believe in Jesus!*
- c. **Abyss** (ἄβυσσος) – An immeasurable depth, the underworld dwelling place of the dead (Rom. 10:7); of demons (Luke 8:31); and of the beast (Rev. 11:7) (Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon, 1). Some examples:
- i. The demon-possessed man: The Bible says: “... [the demons] were [begging Jesus] not to command them to depart into the abyss” (Luke 8:31 NAS). Why not? They know much more about that place than people; *they know it is horrible!*
- ii. Satan: What happened after Jesus declared, “It is finished!” (John 19:30 NAU)? John gave this description: “...I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of...Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years [the complete number of years for him to be bound] were completed...” (Rev. 20:1-3 NAS).

- d. **Lake of Fire** – The place of *final* punishment (Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon). Who and what?
- i. Who will be there?
    1. The beast and the false prophet: The Bible says: “...these two were thrown alive into **the lake of fire** which burns with brimstone.” (Rev. 19:20 NAS).
    2. The devil: The Bible says: “And the devil who deceived [the nations] was thrown into **the lake of fire** and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also [*along with all the demons*]; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10 NAS).
    3. All who reject Jesus: “If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into **the lake of fire**” (Rev. 20:15 NIV).
  - ii. What will be going on? The Bible includes various expressions of torment:
    1. “...weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:42 NAS).
    2. “...eternal punishment...” (Matt. 25:46 NAS).
    3. “...punished with everlasting destruction...” (2 Thess. 1:9 NIV).
    4. “...the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night...” (Rev. 14:11 NAS).

**The Bible makes it clear that Hell is horrible!** If you want to read about Howard Storm – a university professor and devout atheist, *who experienced some of the horrors of Hell*, see chapter 16 of *Imagine Heaven*. For those who know Jesus and read it, *they will be so thankful!* For those who are currently rejecting Jesus and read it, they might 😞 become terrified, 😊 desire to learn God’s truth, and 😊 be open to Jesus!

3. **Our Thankfulness as Believers:** Even though all of us have sinned, and *were spiritually* ✓ blind (2Co. 2:14), ✓ dead (Eph. 2:1), and ✓ enemies of God (Rom. 8:7), there is SUCH GOOD NEWS in Jesus: “...God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions...” (Eph. 2:4-5 NIV). In other words, we were on a fast track to Hell, *but now we are on God’s path to heaven!* Some good news passages:
- a. Jesus is our substitute: The Bible says: “...Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just [Jesus] for the unjust [all people]*, in order that He might bring us to God...” (1Pe. 3:18 NAS).
  - b. Jesus has the keys: He said: “...I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (Rev. 1:18 NAS).
  - c. Bad news, good news: The Bible says: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; **but** thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co. 15:56-57 NAS).

#### 4. **Our Concern for Unbelievers:**

- a. Over the past month or so, I have shared four sermons on Heaven; *I'm excited about going there and you should be too!*
- b. However, today, we learned more about Hell, the place for all evil angels AND, unfortunately, *for all who keep rejecting Jesus!*
- c. Think about this... the Holy Spirit worked in conjunction with our parents **OR** friends **OR** neighbors **OR** coworkers **OR** strangers to bring us God's saving truth and the promise of Heaven! *Wow, we are so blessed!* Now that we know what we know about **sin** and salvation, **Hell** and Heaven, let us kindly and courageously and sympathetically share God's saving truth with others!

**Conclusion:** As we live here on earth – *between Heaven and Hell*, think about this: All who have had a near-death experience report having heightened senses – ➔making **Heaven so much more wonderful than earth**, and ➔**Hell so much more horrible than earth!**<sup>3</sup>

**Let Us Pray:** Dear Father, because Hell is so horrible and Heaven is so wonderful, fill us with thanksgiving and move us to seize every opportunity to share Your saving truth with others!

**Book Reminder:** Imagine Heaven is available in the Narthex; to cover the cost, please put an extra \$10 in the offering plate. Thanks!

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 228.