



Hell, Hades and Gehenna

Ezekiel 33:1 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his *own* head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?" Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.' "When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live. Yet the children of your people say, 'The way of the LORD is not fair.' But it is their way which is not fair! When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. Yet you say, 'The way of the LORD is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways."

Those who have been called to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ have a great responsibility to warn others to flee from the wrath of God that is coming on all men because of sin.

The title 'Son of Man' is used in the Old Testament to refer to those designated as prophets, as in this case of Ezekiel. The Lord Jesus Christ used it to refer to Himself in His capacity of the prophet warning the people to repent and flee from the wrath of God that was to come because of sin.

John the Baptist 'the greatest prophet born to woman' also came preaching the message of repentance and remission of sins warning his hearers to flee the wrath to come.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

As in the prophecy of Ezekiel, those who have done good deeds, even in the name of Jesus Christ, are not saved by them if they are continuing without a relationship with Christ by the Spirit and hence continuing in sin.

Matthew 8:11 “And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

In February 1984 I was driving down the A1 motorway from the North East of England to London to buy some machinery in connection with my business. At 5 o'clock in the morning I passed the Scotch Corner intersection where I went into the overtaking lane to avoid a heavy lorry that had just joined the dual carriageway. It was freezing cold outside and it had been snowing in the days before my trip. As I overtook the articulated lorry at seventy miles per hour the slipstream buffeted my van away and towards the central reservation. Turning the steering wheel to steer the van back into line with the road resulted in nothing happening - the van carried on turning towards the central barrier.

I was on black ice and knew what would happen next. The van moved forward at speed while at the same time spinning round slowly in a clockwise direction. It was a safe bet that I would end up in the opposite carriageway and that the next heavy vehicle from that direction would plough into me at a combined speed of around one hundred and twenty miles an hour.

Everything went pitch black dark as the van somersaulted through the air, spinning now through two axis, vertical and horizontal as it collided with the central barrier and tipped up. In the darkness, hearing and feeling the collisions where the van thumped various objects in its path I knew I was about to die. I was going to see Jesus face to face. But I wasn't happy. I felt a deep sense of loss and being alone in the darkness, aware of having nothing to bring him. No stars in my crown, not afraid but with an overwhelming sense of regret that I'd somehow failed my Master.

In hindsight I realise that I had been given a taste of what it would be like to be cast into outer darkness away from the presence of God. Made all the worse as I had not been ignorant of what God had done in sending His only begotten Son into the world as the Lamb of God Who takes away sin. A sense of wailing and gnashing of teeth, being completely alone in absolute darkness without any hope for all eternity.

I was not ready to face the judgement that follows death. I was not ready at that moment as I had not heard the message of repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. Had I done so then I'd have been baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (removal – releasing from) my sins. This was not to occur until 2009 – 25 years later.

The bumps and the noises stopped. The van was upright so I cut the engine and climbed out. It had come to a halt on a break in the central reservation, which was provided so that traffic could be diverted from one lane to another during road works to either carriageway. It was facing the correct way and traffic was able to pass safely in each direction.

A security man who worked at the air force base nearby and was taking his wife to work there came to see how I was. They had been following my van and his wife had just vomited with shock after seeing the van flying through the air, convinced that I would be smashed to bits. The roof of the van above my head had an indentation, which was a perfect profile of the steel barrier along the reservation. It came to within one millimetre above where my head had been.

The van was no longer rectangular in shape but like a cardboard box which had been pushed at two opposite corners. I was without a scratch or a bruise. God had been doubly gracious to me. I was delivered from harm and yet had been allowed to taste death and the sorrow of being cast into outer darkness as an unprofitable servant. I thank God for both.

Matthew 13:37 He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Jesus Christ the Son of Man is the One who sows the good seed. He is still sowing the good seed but now He does so by sending out His disciples with the good seed of the message of repentance and remission of sins through faith in His name. One may plant, another may water but it is God who gives the increase.

Matthew 18:8 “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell (Gehenna) fire.

Jesus really wants us to know how serious a matter it is to let our love of absolutely anything or anyone – even our own souls - prevent us from taking up our cross and following Him. Hell is being forever away from the God who loves us alone in absolute darkness.

Matthew 22:10 “So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

God has sent His servants with the invitation to enter into the kingdom of God. As in a wedding, those summoned are expected to be dressed in the appropriate manner. The correct attire for the kingdom of God – living in God’s presence – is a robe of righteousness which is offered to all who repent, be washed (baptized) in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission – washing away – of sin. This righteousness is by the gift of the Holy Spirit which is promised to all that repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

The alternative to obeying this message of repentance and remission of sins through the name of Jesus Christ is to die in our sins, be judged in our sins and be cast into outer darkness for all of eternity.

Matthew 24:45 “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We can’t pretend to be disciples of Jesus Christ and expect to escape the wrath of God.

Matthew 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Gehenna – the everlasting fire – was never made for mankind. It was made as a place to contain the devil and his angels, far away from the presence of God. In this passage it is clear that those who hear, believe and obey the message of repentance and remission of sins by the name of Jesus Christ act differently with regard to treating their neighbours compared to others. By their fruits they are known – chiefly love.

Luke 3:7 Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

It seems to be a common mistake for men to believe that they are entitled to special, preferential treatment from God because of their family background. Here John the Baptist makes it clear that each individual is responsible for their own salvation beginning with true repentance demonstrated by a changed way life. God is no respecter of persons.

Luke 12:4 “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

God is love. God is also terrible in His justice. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and a fool ignores the warnings given by Jesus Christ of God's judgment which will be executed on all who disdain His free offer of salvation from sin.

Luke 16:22 "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. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

Here we have a description of two separate places for the containment of the souls of those who have died pending the day in which God will judge the hearts of all men by Jesus the Christ. Acts 17:31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Hades is a Greek term for the place of the dead and here Jesus uses it as was current to describe the place where the condemned waited until the day of judgment. A bad place. Hades is not used as a name for the final destination for all who reject God's offer of salvation from sins. Abraham's bosom is used to describe the place where the righteous await the day of judgment. A good place.

Luke 23:39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

This word Paradise is also in the Greek texts of Genesis sometimes translated as a garden. It means a place specially created for the enjoyment of mankind. In Modern Greek it is used for what in English is a recreational park. It is the same place otherwise described as Abrahams bosom, the place for the righteous to await the day of judgment. Jesus descended into 'Paradise' after He laid down His life to preach to those held there and in Hades.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

It will be the same Jesus whom people have either submitted to or rejected from being their King who is to be the judge of the living and the dead.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Jesus Christ personally is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He saves us from our sins. Hence we must continue to live in Him and He live in us by His Spirit if we are to continue to eternal life. 'Whom to know (ongoing intimate relationship with) is eternal life.

Romans 2:1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

2 Corinthians 5:9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; May we be fully informed of the terror of the Lord.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

“For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. It is not just starting in the Spirit that results in salvation but continuing in the Spirit.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (In the Greek text Tartaros – the pit - another Greek term for the place where dead souls awaited judgment) and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them

an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

This passage refers to those who were amongst the disciples of Jesus Christ who had sold their birthright for temporary pleasures resulting in them twisting the truth to excuse their behavior. 'For whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.'

The early disciples of Christ walked in Holiness and the fear of the Lord, instilling the fear of God in those who had contact with them. May it be so of us amongst this immoral and Godless generation that otherwise will perish for lack of knowledge.

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