***The Doctrine of Hell

RV190-01***

Our subject is "The Destiny of Unbelievers." This is segment number three in Revelation 14:9-11.

The justice of God requires that violations of His moral laws be punished. The only way you escape punishment for one's sin is for another to bear the punishment. God's love and grace toward sinful humanity did just that. It provided the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to bear on the cross in death the sin of all mankind. As the Lamb of God, He paid for our sins. God, thus, is now free to offer forgiveness for sins, and to impute absolute righteousness to all who accept the payment of Christ on the cross in their behalf. Those who refuse God's offer of salvation as a gift through Christ must then bear their own suffering for their evil, and they can never completely pay for their wrongdoing.

**Hell**

This suffering takes place in the flames of hell. The suffering never ends, for the divine price for sin is eternal death. God, who desires all to be saved, and who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, must be true to His own character; His own integrity; and, His own justice.

The apostle John, in his tribulation vision, sees the judgment of God upon those unbelievers who reject Jesus Christ, and who choose to worship the antichrist as their God. I remind you again that this is prehistory that we're speaking of. We're speaking of things that, in the very near future will actually take place on the face of this earth.

These Christ rejecters then will face the full measure of the wrath of a holy God. The tribulation unbelievers are condemned to suffer the torment of hell forever. God's judgment upon the lost is executed in the presence of Jesus Christ and of the holy angels. God, the judge of the universe, does not hold any secret courts or any secret trials. It's all in open court. And there is the horrible picture of people who are in the sufferings of hell, looking up, and seeing the Savior and the holy angels: the Savior who provided salvation for them that they rejected; and, the holy angels who were ready to carry them at their death into the presence of God. They have to look upon a scene that was totally unnecessary for the unbeliever to experience – but experience it, he will.

**Suffering Forever**

God's judgment upon the lost is executed in open court because hell is a literal place with literal flames and literal burning of brimstone. The suffering in this terrible place goes on forever without a moment of peace, and without a moment of relief. There's never a stopping point.

**The Doctrine of Hell**

So, we now summarize, first of all, a variety of basic principles that we should understand concerning the doctrine of hell.

1. **The Bible**

First of all, the Bible is obviously the only source of information about the destiny of those who die without trusting in Christ for salvation. Because people don't like the concept of hell, they try to explain it away. They try to interpret what God says about hell in symbolic terms. Well, what people think is irrelevant, and while people may pontificate on the subject, no ecclesiastical authority can speak for God. Thus, when the Roman Catholic Pope tries to say that there is a way out through purgatory, he does not speak on that from the Scriptures – he speaks on that from his own assumed authority. The Bible is the only source of information about what happens to those who die without trusting in Christ as Savior.

1. **Hell is a Real Place**

Secondly, hell is a real place, and it was actually a place that God made as a place to incarcerate Satan and his evil angels. Matthew 25:41: "Then He will also say to those on His left (here referring to the time when the gentiles unbelievers are taken out of the human race preceding the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom): then He (Christ) will also say to those on his left (unbelievers): depart from Me, the accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."

1. **Fire**

Thirdly, the expression of God's holy anger against evil is in the form of fire. It is characteristic of God's dealing with evil to deal with it with flames. Back in Deuteronomy 32:22, this is pointed out: "For a fire is kindled in My anger," God says, "and burns to the lowest part of Sheol." "Sheol" is the Old Testament word for "Hades:" "And consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains." The point of this verse is that God's anger kindles a fiery judgment, and actually, he is speaking about literal flames with which he deals with evil.

1. **The Lake of Fire**

Then, in the fourth place, the Bible calls the place of eternal punishment of the lost, the lake of fire. We have this term used in Revelation 19:20. We're told that the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who performed the signs in his presence by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, and those who worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone." Here, we're told that the antichrist and his false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire preceding the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

In Revelation 20:10, we also read: "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are also. And they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever." There is a 1,000-year spread between these two verses. When the false prophet and the antichrist are thrown into the lake of fire, that's the beginning of the millennium. In Revelation 20:10, we have Satan being placed finally himself into the place prepared for him and his angels, and this is at the end of the millennium. There is a 1,000-year span between them. And one of the important things for you to note is that the Bible says that the beast and the false prophet are still there. They have not disintegrated in the flames.

1. **Hades**

In the Bible, the lake of fire is also called Hades. It is associated with Hades. Matthew 11:23 indicates that the place that the unsaved go to is a place called Hades: "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades, for the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day." Here, the wicked city of the unbelievers in Capernaum are told they are going to descend into Hades. Hades is a little different from the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the final abode of all unbelievers.

Hades is a way station, and we won't go into the details now, but I remind you that before the resurrection of Christ, believers and unbelievers all went to Hades, because Hades was separated into two compartments, and there was a great chasm between them. On the one side was a place called Abraham's Bosom in the Hebrew, and in the Greek, it was called Paradise, which is the place that all saved believers from Adam on down went. On the other side was the place called Torments, where unbelievers went from Adam's day on down. The Bible tells us that when eternity begins, Hades will be emptied into the lake of fire. So, it's a holding station. After the death of Christ, He went into Hades, and He took out from the Paradise (Abraham's Bosom) side all the believers who were in there, and he took them now directly into heaven. So, now only unbelievers goes to Hades.

1. **Sheol**

In the Old Testament, Hades is called Sheol, and you can see that in Isaiah 14:15.

1. **Gehenna**

There's another word that's associated with the place of suffering. Again, this is a comparison here really to the lake of fire. You have that in Matthew 5:22, and that is the word Gehenna: "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court. Whoever shall say to his brother, 'You, good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and, whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.'" This word in the Greek is Gehenna. So, Gehenna is also associated as a place of suffering.

The Hebrew word for Gehenna is "Gehinnom," and it means "the Valley of Hinnom." Outside of the city of Jerusalem, there was this valley, the Valley of Hinnom, and it was actually the place where, in times past, people brought their children in order to offer them to the God Molech. They would bring infants, and they would throw them into the flames that were burning there for the God Molech. Usually there was a statue, an idol of Molech, and he was a fat-like Buddha character, but in his belly, there was a hole in which the flames were kindled on a grate, and then the infants were thrown in as an offering to Molech. So, it was always associated with a place of burning.

Later, in the times of the Jewish people in New Testament times, the Valley of Hinnom was no longer a place of worship of Molech, but it was still a place of burning, because it was the city garbage dump, and it was forever on fire. The smoke was continually rising from the burning of things that were thrown out into that area. 2 Chronicles 28:3 and 2 Chronicles 33:36 will tell you about the Molech worship.

So, Gehenna became the place of the constant burning of garbage. In fact, criminals who were executed were simply thrown over the wall into the Valley of Hinnom for them to be unceremoniously burned on that garbage pile.

The unsaved dead are consciously in Hades until the great white throne judgment. Then they're thrown into this Gehenna place, which Revelation calls the lake of fire.

The Hebrew word "Sheol" refers to the place where the spirit and the soul of the dead go. In Genesis 37:35, we have that shown to us. Let's take a look at that for a moment: "And all his sons and all his daughters rose to comfort him. But he refused to be comforted, and he said, 'Surely, I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son. So, his father wept for him." This is Jacob speaking, and he is expressing his grief upon the report to him that his son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. And noticed what he says: "Surely, I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." He is going to go to meet his son Joseph in this place called Sheol, which was the New Testament Hades.

Genesis 25:8 speaks about going to one's fathers at death. This again is talking about going to this temporary holding station. That doesn't mean that he's going to be buried with his ancestors. This expression is not referring to a reunion of corpses, but a reunion of conscious beings.

Psalm 49:15 speaks about resurrection from Sheol. It's the place from which the dead will come. The New Testament Hades, then, is the same as the Old Testament Sheol. Both are now the containing stations of unbelievers, and both will, in time, be placed into the lake of fire.

Someone has once said that over the gate to Sheol and Hades one could well inscribe "abandon hope all ye who enter here." And indeed, that's exactly the case.

1. **Resurrection to Eternal Life or Eternal Death**

Then the next point is that everyone (we should remember) will be resurrected to face the justice of God for eternal life or eternal death. This was certainly no secret in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was very clear, for example, from a passage like Daniel 12:2 that every human being will someday be resurrected: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake: these to everlasting life; but, others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." Therefore, Daniel knew that both saved and unsaved people are going to be raised back to life.

Jesus pointed out the same principle in John 5:29. Jesus says, "And shall come forth, those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, and those who did committed evil to a resurrection of judgment." The good is trusting in Christ as Savior. The evil is rejecting Him as Savior. Everybody will be resurrected to face the judgment of God. And when that happens, a person faces one of two eternities. He either faces an eternity at his physical resurrection with God, or he faces an eternity with Satan. Because God is holy, the eternal punishment of unforgiven sinners is a moral necessity for God, and He will punish those who reject. Then God must punish violations of His moral code, because that reflects His own nature. He is the one who decides what is right or wrong.

1. **The Emphasis is on the Soul and Spirit – not the Body**

The next point is that Jesus stressed that a person should have a lot greater concern as to what can happen to him in terms of his eternal future (his soul and spirit) than of his physical body. This is recorded for us in Luke 12:4-5. It certainly is a point well-taken. Some people exercise; they take vitamins; and, they care for themselves in every way imaginable, but they give no concern for the condition of their soul and spirit relative to God. This is what Jesus was trying to put into perspective: "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after have no more that they can do." Yes, we don't want the body to be killed, but you should not fear the body being killed as much as you should fear something else. What is that?

Verse 5: "But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear the one who, after He has killed, has the authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you to fear Him." After the body is killed, the issue is to be concerned for the one who can now take that soul and spirit, and cast it into the lake of fire. So, we should be more concerned with what God can do rather than what man can do.

1. **Conform to God's Moral Laws**

Then another principle of the doctrine of hell is that it is better to take whatever painful steps are necessary to conform to God's moral laws than to allow oneself to be taken into hell. In order to get this point across, Jesus Christ used a hyperbole; that is, taking a concept, and just pushing it to the other extreme so as to emphasize the idea, but you don't take this to the other extreme literally. In Mark 9:43, this is illustrated. Jesus is stressing the principle: while you're alive, take whatever painful steps are necessary for you to come to compatibility with the integrity of God: "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands to go into hell, and into the unquenchable fire."

Now, we know from other Scriptures that this is not to be taken literally. Jesus isn't saying, "Cut your hand off because of your sinning activity." Only some ignorant monster like Muhammad came up with this principle, so that even to this day, in certain Muslim countries, hands and feet can be cut off with people who steal, or who are guilty of certain crimes. What Jesus was saying, in this hyperbolic form, was to say, "Whatever it takes, and whatever you have to go into life without, solve your sin problem. Take steps to solve your sin problem, because if you do not solve that problem (here, in the case of unbelievers), you're going to end up in a place that is unquenchable fire.

He says this in verse 45: "If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off." Verse 47: "If your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out. It is better to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two to be cast into hell." Obviously, cutting off a part of your body isn't going to stop you from sinning, is it? Cutting off a part of the body isn't going to keep you old sin nature from dominating and operating within you. That's one of the clear indications that this is not to be taken in a literal sense. The thing that can be cut off is something internal. It is the sin nature which is to be cut off. That's where the disease lies, and that's where the damage is done.

However, the point of all this is: do whatever you have to do to escape going into the fires of hell.

1. **Conscious Pain Forever**

Then there's the principle of the punishment of the unbeliever – that it will neither be temporary, nor will the individual be annihilated, but he will be in conscious pain forever. Many of the cults teach that people don't really have to worry about hell, because it's only temporary, or else they will be annihilated. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 tells us: "And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." These people will pay for this forever. They will not be annihilated. When God just hands out the condemnation with flaming fire, they will not be burned out of existence. The fire of hell is eternal. It will never cease. Jude 7 tells us that. Matthew 20:5 indicates that. And if the fire is eternal, then it stands to reason that the punishment of those who are in that hell will also be eternal.

Matthew 25:46 says, "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. So, the fires of hell are never turned off, and the punishment is never brought to an end. The suffering in hell never ceases. The flames are never extinguished. Mark 9:48 also indicates that.

In Isaiah 66:24, this same concept is also stressed in the Old Testament in the expression about "the worm never dying," that is then quoted by Jesus in the New Testament: "Then they shall look forth, and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die now." Now, when does a worm die? A worm dies when there's nothing more to feed on. When this Scripture is saying that the worm shall never die, it is telling us that the people in hell will always be there for the worms to feed on: "And their fire will not be quenched." The fires of hell will not destroy the body. It will always be there: "They should be an abhorrence to all mankind. So, when the Bible speaks about the womb not dying, and the fire not being quenched, it means that people are going to experience this suffering forever.

1. **Eternal Separation from God**

The basic feature of hell, of course, is eternal separation from God. That's what the punishment ultimately is. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 really touches on that too.

1. **No Peace**

Then, it is important to realize that hell is not going to be a ball; it's not going to be a party; and, it's not going to be a fun event. It is going to be a place where there is no peace. Isaiah 57:20-21: "'But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. There is no peace,' says, 'My God for the wicked.'" And that's a terrible thing – to be in a place of agony like hell, and never have a moment of rest.

So, all of this tells us that everyone in the human race needs to be born again spiritually to escape the consequences of hell. Romans 3:3, Romans 3:10, and Romans 3:23 all stress that. That is because that not to do this is to stress the only future that the unbeliever has, and that is the flames of fire. Hebrews 10:26-27 stressed that without Christ, there is no future but hell: "For if we go on sinning willfully, after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." If, after what you've been told about what Christ has done for your sins, you keep trying to do something else to cover your sins, there's nothing more that will help you. After that, verse 27 says that there is a certain terrifying expectation of judgment: "And the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." The Bible is very clear that the only future for an unbeliever is the lake of fire.

1. **No Universalism; no Annihilation; and, no Purgatory**

Furthermore, Hebrews 9:27 makes it clear that there's no second chance after death. There's no universalism where everybody is going to be saved; there's no annihilation where everybody is going to be rubbed out of existence and consciousness; and, there's no purgatory where somebody is going to be gradually transferred from the pain of hell into the joys of heaven. Hebrews 9:27 says explicitly: "Inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment." Once you die, you face the judgment relative to where your eternal status will take you.

Religious people, have of course, through the ages, been deceived by Satan with false plans of salvation. And they have accepted these plans with great confidence, usually upon the teachings of some religious leader who declares that he has a new insight and a new revelation from God. And the Lord Jesus tried to caution the human race against these deceivers. And that's why we have that sobering statement in Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name, performed many miracles?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." And Jesus is going to reject people who claim that they have a right to His care in eternity. What was deceptive? What tricked them? What confused them? Following some wrong plan of salvation.

1. **Degrees of Punishment**

Another point in the doctrine of hell that we should observe is that there are degrees of punishment. Matthew 11:23-24: "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, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless, I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

The punishment in hell for the people of Capernaum who actually saw Jesus Christ, the Son of God, walking this earth, and ministering among them, and rejecting Him, while listening to Him and seeing what He did – the punishment of hell will be greater for the people of Capernaum than it will be for those horrible perverts of sodomy and of homosexuality of Sodom.

Romans 2:1-3: "Therefore, you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourselves, for you who judge practice the same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. And do you suppose this, O man, that when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things, and do the same yourself, that you will escape the punishment of God?"

Verses 4-5: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Here, people are walking around speaking pontifically like hypocrites about certain moral sins: the very moral sins which they are secretly engaged in; and, the very sins which they, in one way or another, are themselves guilty of. And when they do that, they're going around parading as paragons of virtue, and what they're cranking out is some human good effect. Because human good is a product of the sin nature, it is evil in the sight of God. So, all the do-gooders of our universe, and all the do-gooders of society are going to add to their own judgment and suffering in hell. The unbelievers will suffer for all their good works, because they are evil. There are degrees of punishment. The more human good you do, the greater will be your punishment.

1. **The Second Coming**

Then we should observe, in this doctrine, that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to the earth in His Second Coming. And when He comes, He will come in flaming fire to judge those who have not believed the gospel. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 reminds us of that. When He comes, He comes again with the flames of judgment.

1. **The Great White Throne**

The last point is that the final judgment of man's sin will take place at the great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). That will be the end of the line for all unbelievers who will now stand before the great white throne, where only unbelievers will stand, to be pronounced guilty, and for the sentence to be passed for them to be transferred forever into the agony of the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them." This is Jesus Christ sitting on His throne: "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds." Here is the book recording all their human good worthless. Here's the book of life. They looked in there, and the name is not there.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. And they were judged, every one of them, according to their deeds." Do you want to face God with your human good, and with your religious rituals? You'll pay dearly for that: "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. And this is the second death – the lake of fire." The Bible indicates that your first death is your physical death, and the second death is your eternal separation from God, and that is experienced in the lake of fire. "And if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

**Lazarus and the Rich Man**

In our conclusion on the subject of the destiny of unbelievers, one of the classic examples that brings all this together (which we are very grateful that the Lord included in Scripture, that helps us tie all this together that we have learned) is the case of Lazarus and the rich man. Please turn to Luke 16:19 in your Bible. I preface this by reminding you that this is not a parable. Sometimes you read commentaries on this passage of Scripture, and they refer to as a parable. That is wrong. A parable is a made-up story. And one of the evidence that it is a made-up story to illustrate a spiritual point is that it is not connected to real people with names. People are not given specific names, so that it is associated with some historical personality who is living.

This is a man named Lazarus, who actually lived in time and space. He was a historical character. That's why they give him a name. It doesn't just say, "There was a certain poor man." There was a certain rich man, and, because Lazarus is real, that's why we know the rich man was real, but the rich man was an insignificant, trivial person. Some people get mad when I say that the great prominent personalities of our day such as: Jane Fonda; Madonna; Bette Midler; and, all the rest of the gang, are trivial people. They are admired by our society, but these are trivial, low-quality people. They happen to be in a position of great power because the nature of man is sufficient to admire their talents, and find satisfaction in the entertainment, which in itself takes quite a stomach. However, the rich man, as this passage indicates, was big in his community, but he was a trivial person. So, God does not even give him a name as he honors this man Lazarus.

Verse 19: "Now, there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day." To be rich does not mean that you're righteous. To be rich does not mean that you are favored by God.

One time, a man who was financially well-off said to me, "God knows whom to trust His money with." And this particular character was about as greedy, and as self-centered, and as grasping, and as cheap as you could imagine. And he was telling me that he was one of God's favored people because he had access to a lot of money. Trivial people of our earth have access to a lot of money, and that's what the rich man was. But he used his money to live a luxurious lifestyle. He enjoyed expensive clothing, which is marked by the fact that it was dyed with a purple dye, which indicated that it was an expensive piece of clothing. You didn't buy threads dyed purple unless you had a lot of money. Furthermore, his undergarments were made of linen. This guy had class. And he lived a life of great material prosperity. But he was an unbeliever. He was not trusting in the coming Messiah, so he was lost. Yet, he was probably (I remind you) an esteemed citizen in the community who did a lot of good with his money in the causes of the community.

Verse 20: "And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores." On the scene comes this poor beggar Lazarus, suffering painful sores on his body from some kind of disease. He's lying there outside of the rich man's gate. He is in abject poverty for some reason, but he was a believer in the Messiah. Therefore, while he is hungry and while he is ill, he is saved. He is in great contrast with the man in the house, and the man on the street.

Verse 21: "And longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table, besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores." Lazarus hoped to receive some scraps of food which were left over from the rich man's table. He probably kept an eye on the garbage pile.

I have been in countries like China where I have seen the garbage piles, and I have seen poor people who eyed what was being thrown out there, and how they would rush in order to pick up what was left over. I remember on one occasion, when I was in China, I was walking in the area where the Marines were quartered. And there was a Chinese man that had been hired to help do some cleaning, and work on the on the facilities. He was walking down a trail, and he was walking toward our garbage dump. And he didn't know I was walking behind him. And, suddenly he stopped and looked down, and there was a cookie on the ground, and you could see that it obviously had had some Marines boot on it. And he picked it up, and dusted it off, and then he saw me. He was very embarrassed, and he took the cookie and walked off with it. He was willing to eat it because he was in such desperate abject poverty. The crumbs thrown off the Marine mess was something that was very strategic to him in his poverty.

This is what Lazarus was. And the dog's pitied Lazarus, where nobody else did, and they came up and they licked his sores. When dogs want to heal their sores, they lick them, and this has some therapeutic value. So, perhaps this was some relief to Lazarus.

Verse 22: "Now it came about that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's Bosom. And the rich man also died, and was buried." Lazarus finally dies, and as happens to all of us when we die, our soul and spirit are carried by the holy angels into the presence of God. Here he was carried into the compartment of Hades called Abraham's Bosom – the place where the saved Jews were sent in the New Testament era. Jesus called Abraham's bosom Paradise when he was on the cross. Luke 23:43. He referring to the same place when he told the thief on the across, "This day you'll be with Me in paradise." That's the Greek term for the same place which is called Abraham's Bosom by the Jews.

In 2 Corinthians 12:4, after Paul had been killed at Lystra, before the Lord resurrected him, his soul and spirit went into Paradise. And Paul uses this term in 2 Corinthians 12:4, that he had gone to Paradise. So, he got a preview of what it was like to be in heaven.

Well, we're also told that the rich men died, and they simply buried him. But no doubt the funeral of the rich man was much more imposing than that of Lazarus. His funeral undoubtedly conveyed his importance in the community, and people looking at the two would have put a great esteem and a great value upon the rich man, and very little esteem and a low value upon the poor Lazarus. How long they were!

Verse 23: "And in Hades, he (the rich man) lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom." The rich man's soul and his dead human spirit went into Hades (the Old Testament Sheol). The condition of the unsaved dead is what is described here – between their deaths and the great white throne judgment that we read about in Revelation 20:11-15. After the great white throne judgment is over, Hades, as we read, is going to be emptied into the lake of fire. This will be the final judgment imposed upon unbelievers (2 Peter 2:9).

The Greek word "Hades" is used 11 times in the New Testament, and it is often translated as "hell." The Septuagint, which was the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, translates the Hebrew word Sheol 61 times by this word "Hades," which again shows us that the two are the same place.

The dead have some kind of temporary body which contains the soul and spirit. I can't explain that to you, but from the Word of God, it is obvious that people who are dead can see things; they can hear things; and, they can feel things. Their senses are operational. They have some kind of an intermediate body that they're clothed with until they receive their physical body back once more.

Well, the rich man in Hades, because of this body, had his senses very much alive. He felt pain. And in the distance, he saw Abraham. And, lo and behold, there was that miserable figure that used to sit outside his gate, that he would look at as he would come in and out of his home. There was that Lazarus reclining in rest and peace in the tender arms of Abraham.

Verse 24: "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and said Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame." Even unbelievers can recognize people that they knew in this life. And as a matter of fact, believers will be able to recognize people from history past that they never knew (for some reason), as the disciples immediately recognized Moses and Elijah, whom they had never seen, on the Mount of Transfiguration. But they knew who they were.

But in any case, the rich man knew Lazarus very well. So, he cries out pitifully to Abraham. He begs him to send Lazarus to dip his finger in some water, and just put a drop on his tongue to cool it off, because he says that he's in conscious pain and agony from the flames of hell. This is the condition, of course, which ultimately will also be in the lake of fire. So, here again, in this historical incident we have brought together what we've read elsewhere in Scripture: hell is a place of literal flames.

The rich man's mind is fully rational. So, he comes up with a plan of relief. He can think. He knows what's going on.

Verse 25: "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus, bad things. But now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'" Abraham reminds the rich man of his earthly life of luxury in contrast to Lazarus' life of suffering and want. After death, their roles are dramatically reversed, as will be the case with all of us. Lazarus, in Abraham's bosom, is at ease with great happiness, while the rich man is now in pain with great sadness. Each man's state is the direct result of his relationship to Jesus Christ, the Messiah Savior; and, each man's state is the result of the justice of God. He's being treated fairly in terms of what he did with Christ.

**A Great Chasm**

In verse 26, Abraham goes on and says, "Besides the justice of God which has placed you where you are, and has placed Lazarus where he is, there's another problem. Besides all this, between us there is a great chasm fixed in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us."

This is interesting observation. There is a great chasm in Hades, dividing the saved from the unsaved. And Abraham says that part of the reason God did that was to keep people from crossing over either way. This shows the enormous change in believers – that they have maximum love and maximum mercy now in their condition. They have been transformed into the character of God, and they look across the chasm, and their natural inclination would be to cross over, to try to bring some relief and help to these poor souls on the unsaved side. And God puts the chasm as much to keep believers from going over to help unbelievers, as he puts it there to keep believers from trying to come over to the side of the believers. Unbelievers cannot escape their place of suffering because there's no second chance to be saved after death.

Verse 27: "And he (the rich man) said, 'I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house." So, the rich man (with his rational thinking), comes up with another plan. He asks Abraham to send Lazarus back to his father's house, because he has five brothers, and they're all the same kind of hell-raisers that he was. He wants his brothers to know how mistaken he was about the teaching of Scripture; about salvation; and, about the Messiah. And he wants him to go to the home of his father. What do we know about this father? He may have been a father who had failed to teach his sons the Word of God and the doctrine of salvation; or, he may have been a father who was very faithful in the teaching of the Word of God, and he ends up with six sons who choose to ignore the truth that they were reared on.

In verse 28, he explains this: "For I have five brothers, that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment." The rich man feared that his brothers would join him in the terrible suffering of Hades. So, is it going to be a great fun reunion? You might say, "Well, at least I'll have the comfort of having my brothers here," but that would be no comfort. In in this kind of agony, you're preoccupied with your own pain, and it's no party with anyone else.

It is so sad that living believers are not as zealous evangelists as the rich man was. This man became a real hot evangelist. He now wanted the gospel to be carried specifically to the members of his family. This was a place of constant torment from which he had no relief. It indicated a touching concern on the part of this rich man, even in his lost condition.

Verse 29: "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.'" Abraham replied, "Your brothers have all the information they need. They don't need any information from Lazarus resurrected. They have all the Old Testament Scriptures. The phrase "Moses and the Prophets" refers to all the Old Testament. They have no further information that they need. When it says, "Let them hear them," the word "hear" means to believe the gospel message of the Old Testament Scripture. God has spoken. Man cannot add to its authority in any way. Lazarus has nothing to contribute to what the Word of God has already said.

So, you can see how important it is to stay in doctrine. How crazy Christians go! You would be appalled if I were to tell you some of the things I have recently have said to me by Christians who are so out of it that they don't even know where they're going anymore. How did that happen? It is because of their negative attitude toward the Word of God. And here this man is told, 'If you don't believe the Bible, your mind's not going to be changed by anything. Your mind is totally disoriented from reality.

**Bible Doctrine**

However, the rich man wants to argue back. Verse 30: "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." The rich man argues that his brothers were not impressed with Scripture, but they would be impressed with a miracle. Where do you hear that today? That's the charismatics all over.

I remember the day I saw Pat Boone talking on television in an interview with a great charismatic leader. And he said to him, "You know, remember how, before we received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, all we had was doctrine." Now, all Pat Boone has is enormous disorientation. He doesn't even understand the principle of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which happens to every believer at the point of salvation, which is the only way you're going to go to heaven, because it puts you in Christ. There is so much ignorance of doctrine out there that it is appalling. Is it no wonder that a congregation like this that says, "We're going to sound forth the Word of God" is under the gun of Satan, and increasingly so, in an enormous way now? We're increasingly under abandonment and threat and pressure. Don't get me started on what I could tell you right now of the workings of Satan through people whose minds have gone out into the outer orbit, and have been lost completely to what they once possessed of the things of God.

**Miracles**

A miracle? Abraham said, "No. A miracle of somebody raised from the dead would not impress them." Miracles authenticated the Word of God before Scripture was written, but once Scripture is written, there are no more miracles needed to authenticate the Word of God. God has spoken in the Bible, and He has spoken intelligently so that we understand, and He doesn't have to prove Himself with miracles. Only the sin nature of man says, "Show me a miracle."

What was the thing that they told Jesus on the cross? "Hey, show us a miracle. Come off the cross, and we'll believe Your claims to be the Son of God. Why didn't Jesus come off? In part, because the doctrines of Scripture had already explained the issue, and they knew from Psalm 22 what was happening, and they should have identified that moment themselves.

Verse 31: "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded by someone who rises from the dead." Abraham contradicted the rich man's reasoning. He pointed out that people will not believe the Bible because of a miracle. They'll not be convinced even by somebody rising from the dead. If you are negative to doctrine, there is no hope for you. Was that true?

Later on, Jesus came into contact with another man named Lazarus, interestingly enough. This man was dead, and Jesus, after three days, had raised him from the dead. And the Jewish leaders saw Jesus actually bring this man alive out of the tomb, who was dead to the point of purification and stinking. All of a sudden, Lazarus comes out alive. And Jesus says, "Take his bandages off. Take the burial bandages off. Loose him, and set him free." Did that convince the religious leaders?

No, you will read in John 11:45-53 and John 12:10-11 that it was from that point in time that the leaders of Israel said, "We've got to kill Jesus. There'll be no keeping the people from following Him if they hear about what He did here in raising this man from the dead." Do you see how right Abraham was? Abraham knew his stuff. And you will find in those Scriptures that it was even worse than that. They said, "We have to kill Lazarus because everybody knows he was dead." Can you believe that? They were going to kill Lazarus: "We'll make it look like an accident, and then we'll get the official Roman government to kill Jesus, and we will silence Him forever." What do you think those leaders of Israel are going to be thinking when they look up from Hades and see Jesus and the holy angels looking at them? What an ironic moment that will be.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1992

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