

# **A Glimpse Through the Portal**

By  
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## **Introduction:**

Imagine that the Lord opened a portal, which would allow each and every Christian one minute in Hell. Any and all Christians who took the opportunity to spend one minute in Hell would never be the same. The torments and agony experienced in that sixty second interval would radically reshape their attitude towards sin, as well as their compassion for the lost.

Since no such portal exists, I invite you to read the following, and contemplate the depths of Hell. This is by no means an accurate account, but an imaginative, biblically informed estimation as to what Hell might be like. Hell is a frightening reality to contemplate because just as no one can conceptualize the glories of heaven, no one can grasp the horrors of Hell as the extent of both lie outside of our earthly comprehension.

## **The Portal**

In the last waking hours of a person's life, as he lies upon his death-bed with a weary body ravaged by the likes of cancer, heart failure, AIDS, etc. His mind vacillates from the terror of the unknown to the sweet comfort of believing that his suffering shall come to an end. Yet, when his eyes close and his heart stops beating a new reality awaits. He leaves the comforts of this world, filled with the common graces of fun, food, friends, and family, to an isolated chamber, devoid of any and all pleasures afforded to him in this earthly life. He enters a fixed and final state, an inescapable prison which will torment him forever.

Hell welcomes him with the roar of a blast furnace as his soul is submerged in the torrents of the flame.<sup>1</sup> While on earth, when he touched an iron with the tip of his finger, he had the luxury of pulling away rapidly. God gave him the common grace to provide abundant cool, flowing water to comfort his blistered finger.<sup>2</sup> God gave him Neosporin and aspirin to ease the effects of the burning surface on his finger tip.

Yet, in hell, much more than the tip of his finger is burning. Rather, his whole body is being consumed by flames. He might try to escape, but everywhere he turns he is greeted by the same wall of fire. Thoughts of cool water, Neosporin, and relief enter his mind, but only seem to worsen the pain as he realizes relief will never come.

As the days turn into weeks and the weeks into years, the man loses all hope. Yet, the rhythm of hell comes to an abrupt halt when a loud booming voice summons his presence. At once he leaves the torments of hell and is fused with his old body.<sup>3</sup> The unbeliever marvels at the new features of his body, as it seems different than the one he possessed while living on earth.

Assembled with him is a tremendous mass of people before a beautiful man sitting upon a brilliant white throne.<sup>4</sup> As he approaches the throne, he anticipates who this person might be. A marginal Catholic, he speculates that this might be St. Peter, the guardian of the Pearly Gates asking why he should allow these people into heaven. Perhaps, his time in purgatory is over, and now he has been called to enter the gates of heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 16:14 Note: this is a temporary holding place for the spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 14:17; Mat. 5:45 Note: There is no common grace in Hell as one is separated from God.

<sup>3</sup> John 5:28-29 The spirit emerges from the temporary resting place to be reunited with the body. At this point, God issues final judgment, in which both the body and the soul suffer.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. 20:11-15

Thus, he brainstorms all of his righteous works. He thinks about the money he gave to the church every Easter, how he used to coach his son's baseball team, how he treated most people well, how he remained faithful to his wife, and never killed anyone. As he thinks about his own works his hope escalates, until the man on the throne summons him by name.

At first glance, the unbeliever drops to his knees in fear, as he seeks to shield himself from the glorious light emanating from the throne. He then begins to make his case for his entrance into heaven, exclaiming all of the virtuous deeds he has done in the name of his religion.<sup>5</sup> Such boasts are greeted with silence.

Then it begins, the glorious man recounts every deed of his life, the time he picked on Gary in kindergarten, every time he disobeyed his parents, every lustful thought he ever had as a teenager and beyond, every covetous desire, the man on the throne even exposed the works he once thought noble as a sham, done only to magnify himself and not his Creator.<sup>6</sup> After what seems like days of humiliation, the judge pauses to pronounce judgment. With a voice which sounded like thunder, the Judge finds him guilty, and declares "Away from me, you worker of iniquity, you shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."<sup>7</sup>

At this point, the angelic guardians of the throne, seize him and cast him into what looks like the crater of an active volcano.<sup>8</sup> Once again, he is greeted by the pain of a thousands flames which inflict his newly acquired body.<sup>9</sup> His new body experiences all of the pain of the fire as it blisters and burns, yet is never consumed.

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<sup>5</sup> Mat. 7:22

<sup>6</sup> Rev. 20:12

<sup>7</sup> Mat. 7:23; Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:15

<sup>8</sup> Rev. 21:8

<sup>9</sup> Mar. 9:44 Note that the body never completely disintegrates as the worm never dies

During his life on earth, his body suffered through the aging process replete with muscle aches, arthritis, and a spotty memory. He sought medical help to maintain its health so that it might deteriorate at a slower rate. Ironically in hell, his wish has been granted. Though the burning fire inflicts agony upon every nerve ending in his body, each nerve still functions perfectly allowing his brain to feel the full weight of the pain.

He anticipates his body falling into a state of shock, so that he might slip into a state of unconsciousness. Yet, this new body does not seem to have the capability. In fact, all of the features of the human body which God designed to restrict pain seem to be missing. As the pain overwhelms him, he ponders suicide. He strikes himself repeatedly with lethal force and though he feels the full force of a burning fist striking a burning face, it does not kill him. After what seemed like years of pummeling, poking, and scratching himself, he realizes that hell does not afford the relief of suicide since he is already dead. To his dismay he concludes, "This pain will remain with me forever."

Though the pain is horrendous, he begins to notice his other senses. His eyes see nothing but black.<sup>10</sup> Darkness engulfs the condemned man, clinging to him like ink. He remembers his childhood and the panicked feeling as being lost in a super market, separated from his mom. The thought of being left alone in a strange and foreboding place would lead him to cry out in desperation until his mom rescued him. Hell presents a similar situation.

Fear overcomes him as he seems to be trapped in an inescapable blanket of blackness. He frantically tries to escape, but can find no door let alone any wall to orient him or another person to rescue him. But then his heart skips a beat as he hears a

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<sup>10</sup> Mat. 8:12

sound. In elation he reasons, that if his eyes cannot lead him out of darkness perhaps his ears can.

Concentrating upon this striking noise his ears hear the howl of what sounds like a thousand voices, wailing.<sup>11</sup> When a child stubs his toe he weeps, but when a mother holds her dead child she wails. The frightening shrill of a voice which sends shivers down everyone's spine. Searching for the sound-bearer of this voice, he seeks to find someone to share in his present misery. One thinker notes, that he would rather be in Hell than Heaven, because all of the interesting people were there. Yet, this man could not find an interesting person. In fact he could find no one; no friend, no companion, and no company for his misery. Then, this frightening thought strikes him; the source of this wailing comes from none other than himself.

As he persists in the dark flame, he begins to think. He accesses his mental hard-drive reminiscing all of the missed opportunities he had in his life, how many times he watched football instead of going to church. How often he told his Christian friends to keep their religion to themselves. Filled with remorse he weeps dry tears of regret.

Then his mind turns to the person who sent him here. The one he holds responsible for this torment. "God, Jesus, whatever you call him" he recites in rage, "That is the one who put me here." Infuriated, he begins to cry out, "I hate you" over and over and over again.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the release which anger gave him on earth, that slight tinge of power, never comes.

Crestfallen, at the futility of his rage, he weeps again in hopeless agony.

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<sup>11</sup> Mat. 8:12

<sup>12</sup> Though a sinner might realize that Jesus is Lord, no one can truly love Jesus apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Mat. 22:37 and Ezek. 36:25-27.

Wondering if there will ever be relief from this agony, one more horrifying thought enters his mind, “Forever.”<sup>13</sup> Even the Jews in the Holocaust had hope that the pain would end, whether by escape, liberation, or death. They had hope. But the word, “Forever” robs him of even that simple element of common grace. “Forever,” he whispers to himself again, “Forever,” he howls in disbelief. And for eternity, he dwells in Hell, tormented by his conscience, his hatred for God, and the agony of the flame without hope of reprieve.

*In the words of Thomas Watson:*

*The loss of the soul is an eternal loss; for the soul once lost, is lost for ever; the sinner and the furnace shall never be parted (Isaiah 33:14). As the sinner's heart will never be emptied of sin, so God's vial shall never be emptied of wrath: it is an eternal loss. - Thomas Watson*

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<sup>13</sup> Mat. 3:12; Rev. 20:10