

HELL, by Fr Reed Merino

Last week I presented what Jesus and His apostles really taught about the WONDERFUL future that God has been preparing for those who will trust Him; trust Him enough to surrender themselves to Jesus; trust Him enough to abandon that "broad way that leads to destruction," and let Jesus and His written teachings saturate them.

Today it is time to talk about the OTHER future: the one that He has had to prepare for the great majority of the human race; and the future He has prepared for the wicked spiritual forces that HE reveals as the "god" of this world's human beings.

Christendom today has become very, VERY biased in the direction of the mercy and love of God: "God loves you AS YOU ARE!" is the "war cry" of this movement. Now, there IS truth in that statement, but as political campaigns have demonstrated very convincingly, with proper training and a bit of creativity, it is very easy to lie with the truth, by only including PART of that truth.

Yet, the BALANCED truth of God's revelation is that the Sunday School Jesus, whose message supposedly consists of little else than, "Love one another...", in FACT taught more about the destiny and torment of hell than all the people of the Old Covenant COMBINED! Even the churches that DO teach the reality of Satan and Hell do not present them in a way that causes their people to be able to deal with them in the way that the ancient Christians did. Very few who identify as being Christian have a "functional relationship" with Satan (e.g., using spiritual warfare in the way Jesus did), and very few seriously consider that hell might be real for THEM. What in the world do you think has happened, so that Jesus' teachings should be so minimized?

I discovered something about human nature when studying the History of Religion at Fordham: Humans twist the message of their religious founders until it fits their preconceived notions. E.G., the original Buddha was agnostic about whether or not there is a god. For him, it did not matter what you believed about any god, as long as you followed Buddha's "Noble Eight-fold Path". Yet Buddhism has largely become an extremely polytheistic religion, especially in S.E. Asia.

But, according to the one who created us and will judge us, the majority of the spirits who inspire the decisions made in Tucson are SATANIC spirits. The majority of the spirits who inspire the decisions made in the United States are SATANIC spirits. the majority of the spirits who inspire the decisions made on planet Earth are SATANIC spirits. This sounds horribly pessimistic; not at all something that would come from someone who supposedly said little more than "love one another," does it!

So, let us examine what the Lord of Love ACTUALLY taught us. As you listen to the following passages PLEASE listen as if Jesus or the apostolic writer really MEANT very word and phrase that he said or wrote.

From Mark 9:

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH /// Trinity XXII Sunday

Verse 43 "IF your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched..."

[By the way, note the "IF": Jesus did not recommend cutting off ones hand, for it is not the hand that causes the thief to sin, is it! Hell sounds like it is quite a physical experience, does it not?]

From Luke 12:

Verse 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.

Verse 5 "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!

[GODLY "fear" is real fear, a fear that even includes "trembling" (Philippians 2:12)]

From 2 Peter 2:

Verse 4 "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

Verse 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

Verse 10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh..."

From Revelation 20:

Verse 10 "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

["Tormenting" sounds quite physical, more than just a regret that one is separated from God. Satan does not "rule" in hell: he is a VICTIM there.]

From Revelation 20:

Verse 15 And ANYone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

[If WE are judged as fraudulent or rebellious we share the same destiny, location and torment as Satan!]

From Revelation 21:

Verse 8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

[Not only the violent and ugliest forms of sin, but also the sins like "cowardice," "unbelief" and lying ("gulp!"). Are you paying attention?!]

From Matthew 18:

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH /// Trinity XXII Sunday

"Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you desired me: should you not also have had compassion on your fellow-servant, even as I had pity on you? And his lord was very angry, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts do not forgive everyone their sins."

[Shows that we are being judged on the basis of our entering into the spirit as well as the letter of the teachings of Jesus. Ignore His teachings at your peril!]

From Matthew 25:

Verse 44 "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?'

Verse 45 "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.'

Verse 46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

[Same message as above... Those in hell are not "annihilated" as Harold Camping of Family Radio taught.]

From 2 Thessalonians 1:

Verse 6 "...it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

Verse 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

Verse 8 in *flaming fire* taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Verse 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

[Hell, again, is experienced as a PHYSICAL event ("flaming fire"); If GOD thinks you do not "know God," hell is YOUR destiny. This is not MY interpretation or MY "spin": the language is quite clear, and has no need of any special "key" or "spin".]

From Hebrews 10:

Verse 26 "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Verse 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH /// Trinity XXII Sunday

Verse 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Verse 29 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?

Verse 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.'

Verse 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

[God COMMANDS all people to "repent" (Acts 17:30), and recognize the authority of His Son over your life; the consequences of failing to do so are eternal and painful: if we listen to Satan's whisperings we share his destiny with him!]

[End of Sermon One, which is a portion of a two part series on Heaven and Hell]

CONCLUSION:

- ALL human beings rise from the dead to give an account of whether they preferred to follow THEIR path rather than God's:

Verse 28 "... ALL who are in the graves will hear His voice

Verse 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."

- The destiny of Hell is not uncommon; rather it is the NORM for all humans:

Verse 13 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

Verse 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

- Hell is not redemptive, but punitive, and includes a physical element that God describes as "torment." His mercy includes the willingness to actually take the consequences for your former godless attitudes and decisions into His own self. But HIS personality is not that of some "softie" who can be counted on to bend to our wills (even if He bends with a scowl)! The idea of interpreting "hell" as a condition in which you are only in some eternal regret over not having fellowship with God is an example of that "tweaking" by human nature I mentioned earlier. According to God's very clear revelation, Hell is experienced PHYSICALLY, not just psychologically!
- The destiny of hell is as eternal as that of paradise. The resurrection body is eternal and indestructible, so when you put an indestructible body into a destructive environment (i.e., the "lake of fire"), there appears to be some kind of

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH /// Trinity XXII Sunday

painful tearing down that cannot destroy such an indestructible resurrected body.

- Notice WELL, that you don't have to be particularly "evil" to have the destiny of hell ("evil" as defined by our watered-down standards). John tells us that among the "wicked" people in hell are also the "liars," the "cowardly" and, simply, the "unbelieving." Paul also included "those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." So, if GOD'S evaluation of you or I includes such words as "cowardly" or "unbelieving" or "liar," then expect the worst. This is not MY interpretation: I am simply repeating what the words clearly are saying, no? This may seem like an unduly harsh attitude for the kind of "God of love" that has replaced the image of the true God. But it actually makes quite good sense if you understand that ALL humans MUST come to be united to one of only two spirits that must enter and eventually control the hearts and the destinies of every human being. You share the destiny of whichever of those two spirits you admit and yield to: the bond with that spirit is eternal, and the decision is yours. Being united to the satanic spirit does not at all (necessarily) turn you into someone who spits green vomit and turns bedrooms into refrigerators: you can be a very "nice person" who is a good neighbor, and yet still have allowed that wicked spirit's internal whisperings guide you to ignore the whispering of the Spirit of Holiness that would draw you into union with your Creator -the Holy One who would restore you to the innocence, purity and joy of His first uncorrupted human pair. We are not judged only on the basis of what we HAVE done. We are also judged on the basis of what we COULD have become, if we were in union with the Spirit who comes from God.

One of the best ways to avoid an automobile accident is to EXPECT one, and drive "defensively". One of the best ways to create anything complicated is to learn the worst that might happen and design something that can handle that "worst-case" scenario (to the best of our ability). Well, one of the best ways to avoid the destiny of hell is to seriously contemplate it as YOUR destiny. Take hell SERIOUSLY, just like you are to take EVERY teaching of Jesus seriously. If He is indeed the creator and judge of the entire universe, then HE is the one who you are to surrender to. He requires all humans to commit themselves to replacing their hearts, values and beliefs with HIS heart, values and beliefs. And, because of His ability to "breathe" His Holy Spirit into you, He can guarantee that you plus the Holy Spirit CAN succeed in making it happen. What He requires, He enables. What He enables, He has the right to require. Those who refuse to engage in that "process" do so because, like Adam and Eve in the Garden, they prefer to listen to the whisperings of the serpent who hates both them and the One who created all of them. NO one wants the destiny of hell itself; but, according to God, the great majority of people, the followers of that "broad way" actually want the WAY that leads to hell (a.k.a. "destruction"): being able to choose YOUR own values, Your own set of "good and evil," YOUR own life partner, YOUR own future.

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH /// Trinity XXII Sunday

The supreme danger of Christendom's form of being a Christian is deceived familiarity. ("Familiarity breeds contempt"). Just like the ancient Jews in the time of the prophets and Jesus: "we are Abraham's children, so WE know Abraham's God." Jesus shocked them by telling them that they routinely listened to Satan rather than God (without knowing they were doing so). We are routinely bombarded with Biblical terms and theologies, without realizing that that has little to do with "KNOWING" the only real God, the Biblical God. Part of knowing Him, like knowing ANY person, is to know their range of reactions: WHEN they approve of you and HOW they show it, WHEN they are angry at you and HOW they show it. Same for God. If you take Him seriously, you have to get to "KNOW" Him in that same way. If you form your picture of Him by trusting your instincts you are virtually CERTAIN to form the wrong picture and relate to a God who, in fact, does not even exist! Your God will most likely take the form of a composite of HUMANS who have influenced you, or will take the form of your reactions to those humans.

We can, in fact, be SO far away from knowing the true character of a person that that person would think we are living in a fantasy.

Just like we are to enjoy meditating on the Biblical picture of God's paradise that we discussed last week, so are we to meditate on the Biblical picture of God's hell. Part of that meditation is to seriously contemplate God telling you that it is YOUR eternal home, along with the evil spirit you let seduce you into not trusting and surrendering to Him.

Your INSTINCTS may lead you to assume that Hell feels SO unreal to you that it need not be taken seriously by you. That is why we have to live by REVELATION, not by instinct. Instinct is a set of automatic reactions created by our life experience and by the truths we have accepted from our social circle(s). What we don't realize is that among of the blend of voices that have created our instincts is the whispering of the "god of this world," that has been going on since we were infants. Trusting your instincts is the supreme foolishness! That is why God didn't just throw down a book: He came in PERSON, in the person of Jesus. And He is still VERY much alive and working "to destroy the works of the devil." If you do not trust Jesus more than your own instincts, you CANNOT avoid the destiny of Satan:

From Matthew 10:

Verse 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Verse 36 And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

Verse 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Verse 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH /// Trinity XXII Sunday

Verse 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Does that teaching sound like Jesus is telling you to trust those instincts you have acquired over the course of a long life? Of course not!

From Deuteronomy 30:

Verse 19 "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live".