

Just a Heartbeat Away

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

“And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

“And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:16-21).

It will only take an instant for us to pass from this life into eternity. Jesus spoke this para-

ble to expound on the temporary nature of our existence here on earth.

Every single of one us is just one heartbeat from facing our destiny. When our time comes, each of us will go into eternity. For those who, through a decision of faith, have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior, this moment of passing will be glorious. In a moment, we are absent from our bodies and present with the Lord. And there we shall stay forever and ever.

Those, however, who choose not to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior shall be translated, upon their death, to a very different place. Hell is not a place of parties and sensual enjoyment. Rather, hell, as described by Jesus Himself, is a place of terrible and endless torment, both mentally and physically. It is a total separation from God and everything that He is.

This booklet describes the great reality of heaven and hell, emphasizing how close we are to experiencing eternity. For all of us, each heartbeat brings us closer to our eternal destiny.

Chapter One

THE PLACE OF FINAL
JUDGMENT

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”

(Revelation 20:11-15).

I would like to invite you to look into the greatest truths ever known to mankind. These great truths come from the Word of God as communicated through the lips and tongue of Jesus Christ. Those truths are as follows:

1. There is a literal heaven.
2. A person has to be born-again to go there.
3. There is a literal hell with unquenchable fire.
4. There is no way to get out of hell.
5. The people in hell are forgotten after the White Throne Judgment.

I have preached upon the full impact of the White Throne Judgment once in my life, in a message called, "Last Looks, Last Thoughts, Last Words."* The saddest thing about the White Throne Judgment is its conclusion, which results in one's final, eternal separation from God. The souls in hell will be resurrected before their judgment at the great White Throne of God. I don't know what kind of bodies they will have. It certainly will not be a glorified body.

At the White Throne Judgment comes the final judgment for the unsaved. Before that judgment, their existence is similar to that of a person put in prison while he is awaiting his final

trial. They are in prison until the trial comes, and then they must enter into the finality of their sentence. Multitudes upon multitudes, indescribable numbers of people, will go to hell. These are all of those who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior through the Blood of the Lamb.

Our Last Look

The multitudes who have accepted Christ by grace through faith, and not according to any work done of themselves, will go to heaven. These have received the gift from God because they have believed that Jesus Christ died in their place, taking their sins upon His body at Calvary. They go to heaven by grace through faith, and they will be resurrected with glorified bodies.

I have often, in my heart only, asked God to roll back the curtain. What will it be like when I see loved ones and say my last good-byes to them at the White Throne Judgment? My conviction is that we who are born again will be seated in a heavenly grandstand, witnessing the final judgment conferred upon the lost. We will be in glorified bodies, while our loved ones who have not accepted Christ, will not have glorified bodies. We will watch as they go through the

White Throne Judgment and their eternal destiny is cemented.

I have no idea the feelings and the emotions we will have. I am overwhelmed every time I think of certain people. I am thinking of loved ones who don't go to church. They are not against it, but neither are they for it, and I sometimes wonder if they are saved at all. I am praying that if they do not know Christ, they will be saved.

The Details of Torment

“And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

“And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is

not quenched.

“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:42-48).

This is how Jesus described hell. First of all, He said that the conscience of the unsaved cannot forget anything and that hell’s fire is an unquenchable fire. The worm, referring to the conscience, never ceases to exist. This means that no one in hell will be able to kill a memory. Over and over and over again, the memories of the earth will return to them, and they have to live with those memories. They do not have God. They have never had the Blood. Again and again they have to deal with memory.

“And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit” (Revelation 9:2).

Another amazing thing about hell is that it is, indeed, a bottomless pit. Now what does it mean for the people in hell—loved ones or whoever they are—to be in a bottomless pit? It

means they never reach an end, they never touch bottom. Throughout eternity, they will be falling and falling and falling. Can you picture it, that they go on and keep falling but never reach an end? God cannot accept those who have rejected His grace and received it in vain. He cannot accept those who have denied His love. They have never accepted Christ and they have rejected eternal salvation. Therefore, no place is found for them (Revelation 20:11).

We have to answer to the justice of God. The moment when we truly believe and we receive Christ as our Savior, the justice of God is satisfied by His blood, His death, His burial, and His resurrection. It is a beautiful, beautiful story.

** You can read this message in Hallmarks From the Heart, Volume 1, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

A PICTURE FROM ETERNITY

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

“And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“And 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 thou

in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house:

“For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

“And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:19-31).

Picture with me the rich man in hell. The beggar Lazarus died and went to heaven. On earth, he desired to be fed with the crumbs from the rich man’s table and lived a hard and diffi-

cult life. The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes from the torment. Then, the rich man started to pray.

He said, "Father Abraham, would you please send Lazarus, that he might go to my father's house and tell my five brethren, lest they come to this place of torment." Hell is full of fervent, earnest prayers.

Many people today in hell are praying with all their hearts but not a single one of those prayers will ever be answered. That alone represents torment. They will never taste forgiveness. They will never taste fellowship. They will never have another opportunity to be united with members of their family who are saved. So it becomes an amazing story of separation.

Oh, we must understand the urgency of getting the message out. The rich man pleaded, saying, "Please go to my father's house. Please tell my five brethren. Please!" Let us go to our families, our friends, our neighbors and plead with them to understand and accept these sacred, sacred realities.

The most beautiful thing about God is that He paid for our sins. He will never take back a single sin. He loves us. He loves so much that He calls us children of God and sons of God.

Swallowed and Seized

“Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit” (Proverbs 1:12).

“Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them” (Psalm 55:15).

Hades swallows up people alive. What does this mean?

It is interesting that the Word of God says that the wicked, the unsaved, go down into hell “quick.” It means that when the body dies, the soul is alive when it goes to hell. It is not living in “soul sleep.” In Proverbs 1:12 and Psalm 55:15, God teaches us that there is no soul sleep, but that Hades swallows them up alive and whole.

Hell is damnation. The conscience never stops dying. It is an amazing story. The fire is not quenched. Men are fully conscious in hell (Luke 16:23). Every person in hell will be judged by his works. They may spend their days on earth in wealth, but in a moment they will go down to the grave.

Everyone is just one heartbeat from eternity. That is the reason we go out soul winning whenever we can. We realize the amazing truth that if

we can just get the Gospel to people, Jesus Christ can save them for all eternity.

Chapter Three

WHY WE REDEEM THE TIME

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).

I remember as a young pastor I would be alone going door to door because there was nobody to go out with me. The church was very small at first, and I would go into my room and weep. I would cry before God and say, “How can I reach them? I can’t stand the fact that they are going to hell. I don’t know how to tell them.” And God just said, “Go and tell the truth.” So I went and told the truth.

I was thinking the other day of all these years, nearly fifty years now, that by the mercy, grace, and love of God, I have been able to tell them the truth. On the street, on radio, on TV, I have told people about the truth, and I have never quit. No trial could make me quit. No hate

could stop my love. No sorrow could interfere with my joy. No doubting could take the place of faith.

Allow me to thank the many folks who have co-labored with me over the years for their faithfulness and for their love. I want to thank my church for being a tremendous Body. If people knew your hearts, they would understand that you are one of the greatest churches in the world. I mean that with all my heart.

Christ's Communication Is True

In hell, according to Luke 16:24, people will be preoccupied with torment. Think of what that would be like—to be preoccupied with torment for all of eternity.

You say, “That cannot be” but it is. If that is not true, then the Bible is not true. Jesus said He created us, and here we are. He told us what would happen in prophecy, and it has.

All of these things are true. This world is a very dark place. We have banded together in prayer and love, to go into all the world the best we know how, either by prayer or by faithfully supporting missionaries. We have been able to go out throughout the week, for all these years, to evangelize the lost. We are available to find

more ways to evangelize the lost.

Why?

I believe with all my heart that the White Throne Judgment is a real event. I am going to see all these unsaved people I have met, and it will be a frightening experience to see them there and to know that shortly they will go to hell.

So, really, we are living for one reason, and that is to glorify God, to be conformed to His image, to love each other, and to manifest and reflect the Master, the Lord Jesus, to whosoever we can, in the boldness of faith, in the foundation of grace, and in the nature of love.

CONCLUSION

I remember an entire family that came to Jesus Christ in my early ministry up in Maine. The husband was a drinker. The wife was a drinker. The daughter was just starting to get a little wild. The son was doing all right. I think I stayed a half a day in that town, just half a day. I pleaded. I begged them to receive Christ. But they sent me away on that day and did not make a decision for Christ.

The husband, who was under tremendous conviction, called me up several days later and said, "I haven't been able to stop thinking about what you said. Can you come over?" His daughter had just been in an accident and was in the emergency room. So we went over, and the whole family accepted Christ and the daughter survived.

What I want you to see is that we are all just around the corner from death. We are all one heartbeat from our destiny.

For you who do not know Jesus Christ, my prayer is that you will not hesitate to recognize the great need of your soul. Please take this moment to place your trust in His death, burial, and resurrection. Come to Christ and live. He will give you a new heart and a new mind instantaneously.

Please make this decision. There is no other way to heaven and eternal life with God. Pray, *“Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive You as my personal Savior. Thank You for loving me so much that You died for me so I can have eternal life with You. Amen.”*