

### 36 Perry's Scope 13 Hell Awareness

Today's Perry's Scope is "**Hell Awareness**." I have recently considered eternal condemnation because so much of what we see today directly opposes God's will. We cannot mock God with our behavior and forget there are consequences to what we do. Judgment is a reality, and the "watchmen on the walls" must send warnings.

There is a humorous story: when the great English preacher, **Charles Spurgeon**, taught homiletics to his student preachers, he coached them on preaching about heaven and hell. He said they should look joyful when they preached of heaven, but their regular face would do when they spoke of hell.

Years ago, preachers reminded their audiences of the reality of hell as well as the blessings of heaven. The mild **Jonathan Edwards** terrified his listeners with his sermon, "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*." Modern preachers rarely warn their congregations of hell because it sounds too harsh for our loving God and makes them uncomfortable. Yet, today preaching about hell is no longer in vogue, though it is a biblical topic. This is not new.

**Andrew Jackson** invited Peter Cartwright, the Methodist circuit-riding preacher, to be a guest in his home for Sunday lunch. Another guest, a young lawyer from Nashville, attempted to draw Cartwright into an argument.

"Mr. Cartwright, do you believe there is any such place as hell, a place of torment?"

Cartwright replied, "Yes, I do." Laughing, the young lawyer responded, "Well, I thank God I have too much sense to believe in such a thing!"

Andrew Jackson could not hold his composure and sternly addressed the lawyer, "Well, sir, I thank God that there is such a place of torment as hell!"

The astonished young lawyer responded, "Why, General Jackson, what do you want with such a place as hell?"

Jackson confronted him, saying, "To put such damned rascals as you are in that oppose and vilify the Christian religion!"

And the young man, embarrassed, left the room.

There is a sobriety that hits us when we contemplate the realities of heaven and hell. Many don't believe in the existence of hell. Some conservative scholars dismiss hell as a metaphor, yet Jesus spoke of the place of eternal punishment more than of heaven as a warning.

Hell is a reality and an eternal place. Originally God reserved this place of punishment for the devil and his angels (**Matthew 25:41**). If people choose, knowingly or unwittingly, to help Satan, they will join him in his eternal end. In a way, those serving the evil one become his messengers or angels by their loyalty to him.

People have forgotten that God knows our words, actions, thoughts, and intentions. In the Judgment scene, we will account for the good and evil we have done. Some local, state, and federal government criminals live "above the law." No one holds them accountable to God's standards of right and wrong as we once did in our country.

Some criminals, like ancient Mesopotamian kings, hold the power of life and death. They have "suicided" many of their cartel associates to silence their potential testimonies. Some of these staged suicides border on the absurd. Recently police found a prominent former official hanged by an extension cord with an abdominal shotgun wound and no rifle at the scene. The law enforcement agency ruled it a suicide. The investigators revised their report to include a shotgun thirty feet from the dead man, an impossibility for

suicide. The criminals seem to be getting away with murder, but rest assured, God knows, and God will judge.

One of the reasons America flourished was that our forefathers and mothers were aware of their personal and national accountability to God. They knew and shared the scriptures knowing God was observing them. Today, when we see the security cameras are on, we will behave differently than when we do not. Police have arrested porch pirates who didn't know the residents' doorbells were recording their actions. God is not a myth or a figment of our imaginations. He is alive and aware of the activities of His creation, including us.

Hell is a frightening place that is difficult for us to comprehend, and it is difficult for us to grasp a place of unending pain and sorrow because we are familiar with the temporal, not the eternal. The torment site is more than an uncomfortable location, filled with regret and remorse.

The most significant element of hell's horror is God's absence. That, too, is a difficult concept for us. God is present with us today, even though we may reject Him or are unaware of Him. He gives us the necessities of life. Jesus said it like this in **Matthew 5:45** (NKJV):

**He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**

Imagine a place without God devoid of His gifts. In addition to being a lake of fire, hell lacks blessings we take for granted. Consider the seriousness of this place.

Have you ever experienced the inability to breathe? The people of **Palestine, Ohio**, had to evacuate their town when the railway accident caused noxious gas to spread over the city, and they could not breathe in the fumes. Maybe you choked on food or had a severe lung infection, and you wanted a breath of air more than anything. Hell is a suffocating place. When God created Adam, He breathed the breath of life into him, and Adam became a living being (**Genesis 2:7**). We, too, inhale God's breath in the life-giving air we take in. But in hell, God is absent, and there is no cleansing air for our souls, only smothering.

Several years ago, I went on a tour of Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. The guide turned out the lights at one point, and we could see nothing. If you happened to enjoy spelunking and lost your flashlight, you would be hopelessly lost hundreds of feet below the surface.

The place of hell is a place of darkness. In **John 8:12** (NKJV), Jesus said, "**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.**" If God is absent, there is no light, only darkness. Jesus describes the place of eternal punishment as "outer darkness" in passages like **Matthew 25:30**. By contrast, the eternal place with God is a place of light. Imagine a glorious place beyond our physical realm. Listen to **Revelation 21:22-24** (NKJV):

**<sup>22</sup>But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup>The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. <sup>24</sup>And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.**

For the sake of time, let me give you some other realities of hell.

- Without the presence of God, hell is a place of thirst. Jesus offers us living water in **John 4:10**, but without His presence, there is no water. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16**, Jesus described the rich man's thirst and request for relief. However, there was no relief for the man.
- Without the presence of God, hell is a place of hunger. God wants to provide for our physical needs, including daily bread. He provided manna for the Hebrews in the wilderness, and Jesus described Himself as the bread from heaven that differed from manna (**John 6:57-58**). We've all been hungry at one time or another; without God, hunger will be eternal.

- Without the presence of God, hell is a place of tormenting chaos. There is no peace without God as He is the author of peace, not confusion (**1 Corinthians 14:33**). Jesus told His disciples in **John 14:27** (NKJV), “**My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**” What torture to miss the peace of God and only know fear and torment! That is the place apart from God.
- Without the presence of God, hell is a place of pain. The Holy Spirit is our comforter (**John 14:16**) and without His presence we only have pain.
- Without the presence of God, hell is a place of despondency and no hope, no mercy, and no fairness.

So far, no one has incarcerated me, but jail or prison would be horrible. I envision a prison as a place of gangs and thugs. While there may be guards, they can't be everywhere, and there will be no guards and no escape from the eternal prison in hell. The apostle Peter wrote about such a place of imprisonment in **1 Peter 3:18-20** (NKJV):

**<sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup>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.**

When Christ comes to judge the world, there will be no exceptions. Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NKJV):

**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.**

Did you notice he said we **MUST** appear? It is not optional, and there are no exceptions if we are part of the crowd who departs into hell. We won't get away with our sins because of our position, family connections, financial status, or winsome personality to schmooze the Judge. His judgment will be fair, just, and final.

We could go on and on talking about the terror of hell, but let's turn our attention to how to avoid its suffering. Jesus has paved the way to the Father so in His mercy that we do not have to receive justice for our sinfulness. The writer of **Hebrews**, chapter **12**, verses **1-2** (NKJV) said it this way:

**Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

On our behalf, the Son of God personally took on the punishment of God so we would not have to endure it. He fervently prayed in Gethsemane for God to relieve the suffering He knew was imminent. He repeated His prayer for release three times, and each time God refused. Listen to **Matthew 26:39** (NKJV):

**<sup>39</sup>He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”**

Jesus asked His Father to let Him avoid the cup of God's wrath. Listen to the predictions of this cup. **Jeremiah 25:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup>For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: “Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. <sup>16</sup>And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.”**

**Isaiah 51:22**

**Thus says your Lord,  
The LORD and your God,  
Who pleads the cause of His people:  
“See, I have taken out of your hand  
The cup of trembling,  
The dregs of the cup of My fury;  
You shall no longer drink it.**

**Psalm 79:6**

**Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You,  
And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name.**

**Psalm 11.6**

**Upon the wicked He will rain coals;  
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind  
Shall be the portion of their cup.**

Jesus left the last supper, that final Passover feast with His disciples, without drinking the cup of protection at the end. He walked the eleven through the temple courts where He uttered His famous prayer in **John 17**. Then the little band crossed the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives, where He prayed in Gethsemane with sweat drops of blood coming from His forehead. The word “Gethsemane” means “oil press.” No doubt, Jesus and His group slept in the place of the olive press. God’s Son felt the pressure the occasion brought Him and bled in the garden.

Soon Judas and the mob came for Jesus, and He endured the unfair trials of His adversaries of the Sanhedrin. He experienced Herod’s disappointment and Pilate’s cowardice before the Romans scourged and crucified Him between two thieves.

Jesus’ crucifixion was more than a historical fact. It was an act of God for the salvation of mankind. Jesus suffered physical and spiritual death so we would not have to die forever. Listen to His words as He hung on the cross (**Matthew 27:46**, NKJV):

**And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”**

Jesus’ life was wrapped up in scripture, as was His death. When you have time, go back and read **Psalm 22** and see if you can envision why He cried out as He did. Jesus felt the eternal separation from His Father at the point of His death. That separation had been reserved for Satan and his followers, but Jesus endured it for us. Listen again to **Hebrews 2:9** (NKJV):

**But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.**

“Death” is a term for “separation.” The Bible describes it as physical in **James 2:26** (NKJV):

**As the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works is also dead.**

The Bible also describes the spiritual or “second death” in the lake of fire, as John points out in **Revelation 20:14** (NKJV):

**Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**

You and I will die physically, but the power of Jesus’ resurrection will raise us at His return (**1 Corinthians 15**). He went before us to die and resurrect so that we could. We will die physically but do not have to die spiritually, eternally separated from God. When Jesus felt His Father forsake Him, He tasted the hell of that separation so we would not have to endure it.

Does the thought of masses of people going to hell move you? If we believe the Bible, the idea that people will be in hell eternally is gut-wrenching. Paul wrote of one of his motivations for preaching the gospel in **2 Corinthians 5:11** (NKJV), “**Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.**” Hebrews **10:31** (NKJV) reminds us, “**It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**”

As we unpack the story of the cross, we can see the good news in the gospel and better understand God’s nature. Our God delights in forgiveness, not punishment, although we deserve neither. Listen to **Joel 2:13** (NKJV), where the prophet reminds us to come to God on His terms because of His character.

**So rend your heart, and not your garments;  
Return to the LORD your God,  
For He is gracious and merciful,  
Slow to anger, and of great kindness;  
And He relents from doing harm.**

Are you seeking the salvation of the Lord? Please call or write me with my contact information in the notes. I would love to discuss this with you. In the meantime, please read the book of Acts, notice each conversion story, and observe what they believed and how they responded. Read it as if you have never read the book of Acts, and do your best to approach it without a prior point of view, just read it as it is.

Jesus IS coming again, and at His return, He will raise the dead and judge us all. He will punish the evil and reward the good. Listen to the apostle’s warning and encouragement in **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** (NKJV):

**<sup>6</sup>since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup>and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup>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.**

The fire of God can purify so that when we endure fiery trials, we are better people on the other side. The fire can also be destructive, as with wildfires on the prairies that devastate life and property. The “flaming fire” of judgment will be eternal condemnation for those who reject the gospel.

As we have seen, God’s character is to save, not destroy. It has been over 2000 years since Jesus ministered on earth and died for our sins. He came not to judge but to save (**John 12:47**). He wore the marks of sin on His body in the crown of thorns, the cut flesh of the scorpion whip, the nails in His hands and feet, and His spear-pierced side. Each of these reveals how sinful we are and how good God is. Consider this reading from **Isaiah 53:3-6** (NKJV):

**<sup>3</sup>He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.  
<sup>4</sup>Surely He has borne our griefs  
And carried our sorrows;  
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten by God, and afflicted.  
<sup>5</sup>But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.**

**<sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**

Do you wonder if God loves you? He has done everything possible to save you from hell and keep you for Himself. He gave us His word, a kind of “owner’s manual,” to direct our steps because we are incapable (**Jeremiah 10:23**). God sent His prophets and teachers to help us understand and follow His words (**Nehemiah 8:8**). He gave us His Son as an example of how to live and as a sin offering to remove our transgressions. Finally, He blessed us with His Holy Spirit to personally guide us (**John 16:13**).

Believe it or not, the Bible has applications for every aspect of life. We miss that because we do not know the Bible well and confine it to a few verses here and there about the salvation process or our worship activities. We apply movie lines, TV quotes, and song lyrics to life situations because we know those. Our forefathers and mothers consumed the Word of God, not entertainment. They knew the scriptures and were happier people even without the modern conveniences and distractions we have, which distract us from what is most important.

**Benjamin Franklin** is considered one of the least religious of our Founding Fathers. However, Franklin knew the Bible and knew that it was a practical guide to life. You remember his speech at the Constitutional Convention when the delegates hit an impasse. He requested prayer times so that God would providentially deliver as He had done during our War for Independence. Here is a portion of that off-the-cuff speech. Notice Franklin’s scripture references.

In the beginning of the Contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection.-Our prayers, Sir, were heard, & they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor.

To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance?

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth that God Governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?

We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better, than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move-that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that Service.

Let us return to the Word of God and the God of the Word. He is so concerned for each of us that He has given His Word, Son, and Spirit to guide us to Him. He has been seeking us all of our lives and wants us to seek Him with the promise that we can find Him with the stipulation that we seek Him wholeheartedly (**Jeremiah 29:13**).

Following God is not a “spectator sport” but full-contact spiritual warfare. The adversary wants to keep you from God, and God wants your allegiance. Both do all they can for their purposes. God gave all for us and wants all from us. Following God is neither convenient nor easy, but it is satisfying now and in eternity.

When we compare the seventy or eighty years of life here with eternity, we see that the promise of heaven and the avoidance of hell are worth the price.

Jesus repeatedly encourages us to “count the cost” and to walk with Him wholeheartedly. Consider **Luke 14:25-33** (NKJV):

**<sup>25</sup> Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish it— <sup>29</sup> lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. <sup>33</sup> So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.**

Paul reminds us of just how much God loves us and what He has given us in **Romans 8:31-39** (NKJV):

**<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:**

**“For Your sake we are killed all day long;**

**We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”**

**<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

We might ask with the martyrs of the Revelation, “*How long, O Lord?*” Why God has long waited to end the world and judge humanity. It may be because of you. Peter tells us in **2 Peter 3:8-10** (NKJV):

**<sup>8</sup> But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**

God is not willing for any person to perish, and in His longsuffering, He waits for people to come to Him. He is not anxious to judge or condemn but to save.

I hope the Asbury University revival spreads across the world. Maybe this is a final appeal from God for lost people to seek the Lord before the end. Who knows? Whether the end is near or not, we are all one day closer to His return and the end of time than yesterday. Today is the accepted time to come to God so we can avoid the pit of hell and find the joys of His presence.

Keep The Light of God’s Everlasting Concern Burning and Follow Him!

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