CAPTURING THE REALITY OF

Heaven AND HELL

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Chapter 1

Capturing the Reality of Hell

The next time you attend a funeral, take a look at the faces of the people there—especially the unbelievers. Look closely into the eyes of those standing around the open casket and you'll see questions. Questions like: *Where are they now? What actually happens after death? Is there really a literal heaven? ...a hell?*

I don't care how much education you have or how many degrees hang on your wall, a face-to-face confrontation with the awesome reality of death will make even the most earthly minded person stop and think.

The problem is that people who don't know or respect the authority of the Word of God have no basis for finding answers to those weighty questions about eternity. They're left grasping at baseless theories and empty myths.

The truth about heaven and hell is a powerful thing. It will liberate you.

And you will know the truth and the truth shall make you free. John 8:31

However, merely acknowledging the existence of heaven and hell is not enough. To be truly set free you must "capture" the reality of heaven and hell in your heart. Once you do, it will change the way you live. It will change what you say and how you say it. It will literally change the way you think.

I'm convinced that very few believers have ever really grasped the reality of heaven. If they had, they wouldn't act the way they do.

You can't be heaven-minded and be full of lust or unforgiveness. You can't be heaven-minded and be a gossiper, a liar or a cheater. There's no doubt about it, you need a revelation of heaven. And you can't get a true revelation of heaven without also seeing the awful reality of hell.

The Source of Truth

Where can we turn to learn the truth about what happens after death? The scientists? They'll be the first to admit they don't have a clue. The news media? They don't know. The government? They're no help either. No, there's only one source of spiritual truth in the universe.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:1-3

Before anything else existed, there was the Word. The Word was with God from the very beginning. I've had people ask me, "How do I contact God?" I tell them, "Make contact with His Word and you've contacted God!"

The verse above tells us nothing was made apart from the Word. That means all matter is derived from the living, active Word of God. It's truer and purer than anything you can see, touch or hear.

That's why God's Word is the source of all truth—including truth about heaven and hell.

That's difficult for many educated people to accept. Our modern system of education conditions us to accept only that which can be observed with the senses.

You may be thinking, "My professors never talked about eternity. Surely if there was a real heaven and a real hell I would have learned about it in college." Don't make the mistake of assuming that every important thing there is to know is being transmitted through our schools. If you base your life on what you learned through a humanistic system of education, you're going to reject the most important knowledge any man or woman can ever learn.

Tragically, our educational institutions have neglected the most crucial knowledge of all—the knowledge that can only be derived from an all-knowing God and His Word.

That's why highly intelligent people who are not born again get very uncomfortable at funerals. In spite of all their degrees, nothing in their education has prepared them to think about what happens after a man dies.

Religion isn't much help either. Religious people go to a funeral, shrug their shoulders and say, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

That sounds very pious but it's not biblical. It's empty religious talk designed to bring a sense of peace. But it's not true peace. It's the kind of peace the world

gives (John 14:27).

Our society as a whole is willing to accept "religion's" view of life and death. But it has rejected the true knowledge of heaven and hell revealed in God's Word, just as it has rejected the truth of man's need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Mind Blinder

In the Bible God clearly states, "My people perish for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Now, He's not talking about the kind of knowledge you get in college. It's a lack of Bible knowledge that will kill you. Even worse, neglecting the truth that can be found in God's Word may result in your spending eternity in hell. That's just what Satan has in mind.

In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. II Corinthians 4:4

The devil is out to blind you to the truth of the gospel. He knows that if he can accomplish that, you're finished. You have no hope.

How does Satan blind a person's mind? He has many tools at his disposal but two in particular are especially effective.

Blinded by Human Reason

Satan loves to use human knowledge and education to blind the minds of people to the truth about heaven and hell. It's one of his most common and effective methods of operation.

Earthly reason and intellect are absolutely useless when it comes to comprehending the things of God. In fact, they're often a hindrance.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; I Corinthians 1:27

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. I Corinthians 2:13,14

This is why statistics indicate the vast majority of people who get born-again today are children. Many adults have had their minds blinded by education and human reason. This is especially prevalent in those who are highly educated.

Why do you think there has been such a move to remove all traces of God and the Bible from our public school system? Satan wants to blind you with what you learned in elementary school, high school and college.

Blinded by Emotion

Another frequent "mind-blinder" that sends many a person to hell is emotional religion.

Remember, the Word says, God's people perish because of "a lack of knowledge," not a lack of emotion. Yet, many people attend a church where there's plenty of shouting and jumping up and down but precious little Biblical truth going forth.

There's nothing wrong with getting your emotions involved in your worship. But when it begins to take the place of sound teaching from the Word, you're in danger of having your mind blinded by the enemy. You can begin to think that if you don't "feel it" it's not real.

Don't let yourself be blinded to the truth of God's Word, especially where it concerns matters as important as your eternal destiny. Don't perish because a lack of knowledge of these matters. In the next few pages you'll discover some truths that will literally revolutionize your life. But be warned—once you've read them you're responsible for them.

Get ready to capture the reality of heaven and hell.

Hell: A Real Place

One of the most vivid descriptions of hell you'll find in scripture came from the mouth of Jesus Himself. We find it beginning with Luke 16:19:

Now 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...

Now the story that Jesus is relating here is not some fable. This isn't a story He just made up to illustrate a point. Jesus said there was "a certain rich man." He's referring to a real event that happened to real people. Jesus knew these things by revelation knowledge.

At the moment the beggar died, many people would contend his existence was over. After death—nothingness, annihilation. But notice what Jesus says:

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

Child of God, the first thing you're going to see when you die is angels coming to escort you to heaven.

It makes sense when you think about it. When you're entering a realm you've never seen before, you need some guidance—someone who knows their way around. When I die, my angels will come up and say, "Come on, brother. We're going to take you to that place you've been preaching about all your life." Glory to God! I get excited just thinking about it.

There is another side to this story, however. A tragic side. Jesus shows us the fate of the rich man:

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.

From this passage of scripture we learn several things about the awful place called hell.

First, we find that it's a place of torment. Hell is not going to be a place where you sit around and socialize. It's a place of agony and utter despair. The rich man's torment was so intense, he believed a single drop of water might bring him some relief.

Please believe me, hell is a place you do not want to go. Nor is it a place you want your loved ones to go either.

If you end up in hell, one of the first things you'll start thinking about is your friends and family. You'd think, "If only I could go back and warn them. If I could just tell them to get saved..." Notice how the rich man pleaded to be able to go back and warn his brothers about the horrendous place. Yet Abraham knew it would do no good. Read on:

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.

The same is true today. If you won't believe God's Word you won't believe someone who comes back from the dead. I can't scare you into getting saved. It takes a quality decision.

I can't and won't try to manipulate you into taking the step that will cause you to miss hell. But I promise, if you really believed there was a hell, you'd do anything necessary to avoid it.

Who Goes to Hell?

At this point you may be wondering precisely what type of person goes to hell when they die. An answer to that question can be found in Psalm 9:17:

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

Child of God, there is only one characteristic that dooms a person to hell—wickedness. That's it in a nutshell.

Wickedness takes many forms but the most prevalent is "unbelief." An unbelieving heart is a wicked heart (Hebrews 3:12). Walking in unbelief is wicked. Rebellion against God is wickedness. So is gossip, envy and strife.

Please don't close this book and walk away thinking, "I don't want to hear this. I can't deal with this heavy stuff." It's too late. You've heard the truth. You are now responsible before God for what you've read.

Hopefully, if you haven't already, you'll make a quality decision to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life. If you do, you'll spend eternity saying, "Thank you, Jesus. I made heaven
and missed hell."

Where is Hell?

As we just read, the Bible declares the wicked shall be turned into hell. But where is this placed called hell?

Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. Isaiah 14:9

Notice the phrase, "hell from beneath." The Bible states repeatedly that hell is located under the earth or at the center of the earth. It's a literal place with an actual physical location.

Yes, hell is a real place, but it may surprise you to discover that it wasn't originally intended for man. Scripture tells us hell was created as a place of fiery punishment for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

God did not intend for you or me to go to hell. However, you can choose to go there if you want. God will not override your free will. You can follow Satan and his demonic hoard all the way to hell if you so choose.

A Covenant with Hell

A covenant is a solemn binding agreement or contract. As unlikely as it may sound, the Bible says some people have made such a pact with hell itself.

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; Isaiah 28:15

You make a covenant with hell by the way you live and by what you do with your life.

It is possible to live in such a way as to say to hell, "Save me a spot. I'm headed your way." If you've been living your life that way, I've got good news for you. That covenant can be broken. You can break it today.

You don't have to end up in hell. There is no need to spend eternity separated from God.

A Closer Look

I know it's not pleasant to take a hard look at such a grim place as hell. But it's absolutely necessary if you're going to truly comprehend the glory of heaven and the depth of God's mercy and love.

Here are some additional aspects of hell of which you ought to be aware.

First, hell is a place of sorrow.

The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me; II Samuel 22:6

Make no mistake about it, hell is a place of unending, gut-wrenching sorrow. Sorrow for missed opportunities to surrender to Jesus Christ. Sorrow that comes when a human soul is separated from God.

Second, hell is a place of captivity.

Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: Isaiah 5:13-15

Notice that first verse. A man who has no knowledge (of the Word of God) goes into captivity. He is in bondage in this life and, unless he changes his heart, he goes into the ultimate bondage in the life to come.

This passage also tells us that "hell hath enlarged herself." I once heard a foolish man speculate that maybe hell would run out of room before he got there. Not a chance. Hell has been enlarged. In fact, Proverbs 27:20 says:

Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Please don't pin your eternal destiny on the flimsy, foolish hope that hell will run out of room. It has been enlarged without measure and will never be full.

Finally, you need to be aware that hell is a certainty for all those who reject God's offer of love and grace in Jesus Christ.

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person,
a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy

conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds);

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: II Peter 2:4-9

Hell is a certainty. If God didn't permit you to reject his offer of salvation and go to hell He would owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology.

God is love but He is also just. If all the wicked of the earth were destroyed in the time of Noah, what makes you think you can live any way you want and escape judgment?

Something Worse Than Hell

The misery, sorrow and torment to be experienced in hell is difficult for the mind to comprehend. Yet, if you go to hell, it will not be your final home for eternity. Believe it or not, an even worse place is your ultimate destination.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14

Ultimately, at the end of this present age, all of hell and every being in it are going to be cast into something the Bible calls "the lake of fire." There, all of the suffering of hell will be magnified a hundred times.

This is your destiny if you reject Jesus Christ. Please don't do that. Don't make a reservation to experience hell and the lake of fire. God has placed before you a choice:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: Deuteronomy 30:19

Now you know the truth. If you spend eternity in hell it is because you chose to reject God's gracious offer of heaven.

Heaven. That's the other side of this coin. Now that you've looked squarely at the horror of hell, let's catch a glimpse of the glory of heaven.

Chapter 2

Capturing the Reality of Heaven

The Bible has much to say about heaven. No one passage of scripture will give you a complete picture, yet when you look at the whole scope of God's Word a clear image of the heavenly kingdom begins to emerge. It's a picture that, once you grasp it, will change your life forever.

A Place Called Heaven

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. Ecclesiastes 5:2

It may seem elementary, but the first thing you need to know about heaven is that God dwells there. The King and Creator of the universe makes His home in heaven. It is also the seat of His government. It is where you'll find His throne.

Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: Isaiah 66:1

Heaven is the primary realm of God's angels as well.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven... Mark 13:32

Don't ever doubt it. Heaven is a real place. A place more solid and substantial than the room you're sitting in. Don't let Hollywood's images of some ethereal, wispy place color your concept of heaven. It's a real place, just as surely as earth is a real place.

Get Ready for a Transformation

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [meaning our bodies] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. II Corinthians 5:1

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle [body], to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. II Peter 1:13,14

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Philippians 3:20,21

All of the above passages of scripture illustrate an important point. One day all of us who know Jesus Christ are going to shed this old body like a worn out coat and put on a new glorified body.

Exactly what will that body be like? The Apostle John said he didn't know for sure:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

The one thing that's for certain is that when that moment comes we're going

to be like Jesus and it's going to be glorious.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." I Corinthians 15:51-54 (NIV)

Someday, either at death or when Jesus returns for His church, our weak, perishable bodies are going to be exchanged for imperishable ones. That's a good thing. If you're going to be a citizen of heaven, you'll need a glorious body because, brothers and sisters, heaven is one amazing place.

A Look at Heaven

The Bible, beginning in Revelation 21:10, gives us a breathtakingly detailed description of the heavenly city. So detailed in fact that we're even given a blueprint of the place!

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve
tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall

in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:10-27

I don't know about you, child of God, but just reading that description thrills my soul to its very core. I've determined that I must do whatever it takes to make it to heaven. It's far too wonderful and hell is far too terrible for me to risk falling short. I must make it to heaven.