

# Is Hell a Real Place?

On Wednesday, March 28, 2018 the "La Repubblica printed an article saying that the pope had expressly denied the existence of hell and the immortality of the human soul in a recent conversation with his longtime friend, Eugenio Scalfari, founder of the newspaper . . . Scalfari, an atheist, reportedly asked the pope about his theories regarding creation and eternal life. . . . In response, Pope Francis is quoted as denying hell, in what the Vatican statement has referred to as a "reconstruction" of the conversation between the two men." (breitbart.com/national-security/2018/03/30/vatican-refuses-disavow-popes-denial-hell/). Reportedly, the Vatican stated that Scalfari did not communicate the Pope's exact words about hell, but it did not deny that the Pope had in essence stated that hell did not exist.

**HISTORICAL ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING.** This is an amazing statement if true since the Roman Catholic Church has historically believed that there is a real hell.

"The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire." The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs."<sup>1</sup>

We shall now examine what the Bible actually teaches.

**JESUS REFERRED TO A LITERAL HELL.** Hell is referred to a total of 13 times in the New Testament. The gospels or the memoirs of Matthew, Mark and Luke refer to hell 11 times. The first time hell occurs in the New Testament is Matthew 5:22 when Jesus said,

But I say to you that everyone who is

angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. Matthew 5:22 (NASB)

This verse reveals that Jesus believed in a literal hell and He believed that hell was a fiery place (Matthew 23:33). Then nine verses later Jesus said that those who go to hell will be thrown bodily into it.

If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Matthew 5:29 (NASB)



The next verse states the same truth (Mark 9:47). If we read Matthew 10:28, we discover that both the soul and body end up in hell. If anyone thought that only the body went to hell but somehow the soul escaped hell, Jesus clearly makes the point that the entire person is sent to hell. In Matthew

1. The Catechism of the Catholic Church ,1035.

25:41 Jesus tells us the devil and his angels or evil angels (demons or evil spirits) will also spend eternity there,

Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels . . ." Matthew 25:41 (NASB)

In fact, hell was designed for the devil and the demons. Imagine spending eternity in hell in the future home of the devil and the demons.

In Mark 9:43-44 Jesus echoes the fact that hell is not only a fiery place, but it is a place where a people never die and the fire of hell never ceases to burn.

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9:43-44(NASB)



That is, Jesus has told us hell is an eternal, fiery place where some people will go. Those who go there will never die and will burn forever and forever. In Matthew 25:30 we discover what we already expected - hell is a place of eternal pain and torment.

Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 25:30 (NASB)

Anyone who goes there will cry and grind their teeth since the pain will be so horrible. The Greek word that is trans-

lated as hell is *brygmos*. This Greek word means to shiver, bite or grind the teeth due to extreme pain. Recently, I had major surgery and in the first few days after surgery I started shaking due to extreme pain when the pain medication started to wear off. Jesus says that those who are assigned to hell will shake or grind their teeth and weep.

**JAMES, PETER AND REVELATION REFER TO HELL.** The book of James refers to hell as a place of fire (James 3:6). 2 Peter 2:4 tells us that angels will be cast into hell. It also tells us that hell is a dark place. Revelation 14:9-11 states that hell is a place of brimstone and torment. This means that hell is like a barbecue pit with hot charcoal. Those in hell will

feel the heat but not see any light. Hell is a fiery, eternal, dark and painful place.

**THERE ARE TWO ETERNAL DESTINIES.** Some teach that there is only one eternal destiny called heaven. The initial report is that the Pope believes in only one destiny - heaven. Otherwise, unbelievers cease to exist and will not

experience hell. But this an error since Jesus teaches us that there is a place called hell. Later in Revelation 20:14 we learn that hell is also called the Lake of Fire. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus tells us that everyone will live forever or eternally in one of two places.

"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:46 (NASB)

We will experience either eternal punishment or eternal life.

In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus gives us a parable about a rich man and a beggar which reveals that every person will experience one of two destinies. The beggar was called Lazarus. We are

never given the name of the rich man. Maybe Jesus did that intentionally so that he would represent each one of us. The rich man lived a good life of ease and comfort (Luke 16:19). The beggar lived on the street and was glad that he could eat crumbs that fell from the rich man's table onto the floor.

Jesus tells us that eventually they both died (v. 22). The poor man was sent to Abraham's bosom or heaven and the rich man was sent to Hades or hell.

*In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame." Luke 16:23-24 (NASB)*

Notice that when Lazarus died he went to a real place called Abraham's bosom or heaven. Jesus considers Abraham's bosom or heaven to be a real place. He also treats Hades or hell as a real place. He treats them equally as real places. He describes Hades as a place of torment. Hell is an eternal place of torment. In verse 26 we discover that the beggar and rich man are in two different places since there is a great chasm between Abraham's bosom and Hades and no one can cross over later in eternity. That is, after we die we are judged and assigned to either heaven or hell. We cannot change our destiny after death.

**SUMMARY OF HEAVEN.** What is heaven? First, it is not a place of torment but one of joy. Revelation 21:3-8 describes heaven. We are told that God will live with us. He will wipe away every tear. We will not die again but live forever in our

new eternal bodies. Verse 8 explains that evil will not exist in heaven.

*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Revelation 21:8 (NASB)*

You read more about heaven in Revelation 21:3-22:5. In short, we do not and cannot understand heaven. Heaven will be heavenly!

**CHOOSING ETERNAL LIFE.** Where do you want to spend eternity? Which destiny will you choose? A man once told me that he was going to hell. Most people think they are going to heaven since they consider themselves to be a good person and think that our good deeds will determine our future destiny. But Jesus said in Luke 18:19 that only God is good. That is, we are not good and Romans 3:12 tells us that none of us can do anything that is good enough to earn heaven.

Romans 10:9-10 tells us that you and I can be saved from hell by believing that Jesus our God died in order to forgive our sins and was resurrected from the dead. The proof that you really believe that is that you will confess or admit that truth with your mouth.

*Everyone who calls  
on the  
name of the Lord  
will be saved!*

*Romans 10:13*



*... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture*

says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”  
For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same  
Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.  
For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”  
Romans 10:9-13 (ESV)

We urge you to ask God to forgive your sins, admit that  
Jesus Christ died and returned to life in order to forgive your  
sins.