

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

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Part 10 – Tophet

Is there a place called hell? Is it eternal? Do people go there? In our generation, the belief that hell is real and eternal, has become watered down to outright being discredited. Today, we discuss this topic as we read the section of the script on Tophet. Please read it by [clicking on this link](#).

Tophet, as described in BibleStudyTools.com means the following; “=*Topheth, from Heb. toph "a drum," because the cries of children here sacrificed by the priests of Moloch were drowned by the noise of such an instrument; or from taph or toph, meaning "to burn," and hence a place of burning, the name of a particular part in the valley of Hinnom. "Fire being the most destructive of all elements, is chosen by the sacred writers to symbolize the agency by which God punishes or destroys the wicked. We are not to assume from prophetic figures that material fire is the precise agent to be used. It was not the agency employed in the destruction of Sennacherib, mentioned in Isa 30:33...Tophet properly begins where the Vale of Hinnom bends round to the east, having the cliffs of Zion on the north, and the Hill of Evil Counsel on the south. It terminates at Beer 'Ayub, where it joins the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The cliffs on the southern side especially abound in ancient tombs. Here the dead carcasses of beasts and every offal and abomination were cast, and left to be either devoured by that worm that never died or consumed by that fire that was never quenched." Thus Tophet came to represent the place of punishment.*”

This was an actual physical place which represented eternal punishment. BunyanMinistries.org says this about Tophet in Pilgrim's Progress where Christian passes by the yawning mouth of Hell; “*Now about in the middle of this Valley, here I noticed the location of the very mouth of Hell, it in fact being hard up against the narrow way. At the sight of this Christian wondered what he should do since so much flame and smoke were belching forth, accompanied with sparks and hideous noises. These fearful eruptions seemed quite unruffled concerning Christian's sword, as had been the case with Apollyon; so the trembling pilgrim found it necessary to resort to another weapon called All-Prayer. In using this I was able to hear him cry out, "Oh Lord, I implore you to deliver my soul!"*”

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by hell, by the presence of evil, when all hell is belching out it's flames at you? Are there times when instead of using the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, you've had to just start praying, when you're up against too much at the mouth of hell, and there are too many principalities, too many hideous voices, too many demons speaking in your mind and lies that are coming against you? This prayer refers to praying in the Holy Spirit, in your prayer language, tongues. The Holy Spirit knows exactly how to pray perfectly through you according to God's will. All-prayer comes from **Ephesians 6:18**; “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*”

In The Celestial Railroad, we read this about Tophet; “*The spot where we had now paused was the same that our friend Bunyan – a truthful man, but infected with many absurd notions – has designated, in terms plainer than I like to repeat, as the mouth of the infernal region. This, however, must be a mistake, inasmuch as Mr. Smooth-it-away, while we remained in the smoky and ghastly cavern, took occasion to prove that Tophet has not even a metaphorical existence. The place, he assured us, is no other than the crater of a half-extinct volcano, in which the directors had caused iron-forges to be set up for the manufacture of railroad iron. Hence also is obtained a plentiful supply of fuel for the use of the engines. Whoever had gazed into the dismal obscurity of the broad cavern mouth, whence, ever and anon, darted huge tongues of dusky flame--and had seen the strange, half-shaped monsters, and visions of faces horribly grotesque into which the smoke seemed to wreath itself--and had heard the awful murmurs, and shrieks, and deep shuddering whispers of the blast,*”

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sometimes forming themselves into almost articulate words, would have seized upon Mr. Smooth-it-away's comfortable explanation as greedily as we did."

Isn't that same thought in the minds of many Christians today that there is no infernal region, hell? The devil smooths away the truth that hell exists. We can see Mr. Smooth-it-away lying to his passengers about the truth of the existence of hell, which brought comfort to them to believe that hell is not even a metaphorical existence. If hell does not metaphorically exist, then there is no need to use all prayer as a weapon, as it was with Christian when he encountered the mouth of hell and all its demons.

Mr. Smooth-it-away has lied about the existence of hell today to many a believer on the Celestial Religious Railway, bringing comfort to them regardless as to what the Bible scriptures descriptively state.

In **Revelation 20:15**, we read this; *"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."* If you're not born again, your name is not in the book of life, and you will be cast into the lake of fire. It's not His will to do it, he doesn't send anyone to hell, but rather, because of your choice to reject the plan of salvation, that is what sends you to hell.

Jesus says in **Matthew 10:28**; *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* Fear God, have a healthy reverence for Almighty God.

Continuing in our story, we read; *"Among the idlers about the train, most of whom were puffing cigars which they had lighted at the flame of the crater, I was perplexed to notice several who, to my certain knowledge, had before set forth by railroad to the Celestial City. They looked dark, wild and smoky, with a singular resemblance, indeed, to the native inhabitants, like whom, also, they had a peevish propensity to ill-natured gibes and sneers, the habit of which had wrought a settled contortion on their visages. Having been on speaking terms with one of them – an indolent, good-for-nothing fellow, who went by the name of Take-it-easy – I called to him, and asked what was his business there.*

"Did you not start," said I, "for the Celestial City?"

"That's a fact," said Mr. Take-it-easy, carelessly puffing some smoke into my eyes. "But I heard such bad accounts that I never took pains to climb the hill on which the city stands. No business doing, no fun going on, nothing to drink and no smoking allowed, and a thrumming of church music from morning till night. I would not stay in such a place, if they offered me a free house and living."

"But, my good Mr. Take-it-easy," cried I, "why take up your residence here, of all places in the world?"

"Oh," said the loafer, with a grin, "it is very warm hereabouts, and I meet with plenty of old acquaintances, and altogether the place suits me. I hope to see you back again some day soon. A pleasant journey to you."

Doesn't this all sound familiar with what's going on in churches today? Why would people choose to take their residence at the mouth of hell, seeing how far they can go before being consumed? How many have you heard in jest saying that when they go to hell, they look forward to hanging out with their friends to continue to party? But here, in this story, they're just getting warmed up to the evil of hell, they're not in hell yet because they're still alive. They're at this mouth where they're hearing the voices and tasting the evil of what hell has to offer.

How many Bible believers today are in a similar place as Mr. Take-it-easy and his old acquaintances, in that they would prefer the life of eat, drink, and be merry with the world which leads to eternity in hell, than to prepare for spending an eternity in Heaven. How many are spending more time preparing for retirement in mid-life, with all the eating, drinking and merriment, than they are for eternity? Jesus says your soul can be required of you at any moment. Jesus calls this type of person a fool because it's all about earthly pleasures and possessions, than it is the kingdom of God.

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Once again, it shows the heart of a Bible believer who has not repented of his sins and become born again, and how many Bible believers are on this road today with one foot in the world and one foot in the Church? When you're not born again, it's easy to straddle the fence with one foot in the church and one in the world because you have not become a Christian, but merely profess to believe in the Bible, but are still in the kingdom of darkness with the devil as your father until you repent of your sins and receive the Holy Spirit to come into your body, which then becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is what qualifies you to become a citizen of heaven on the day that you die.

Remember that there is no dual citizenship for the born again Christian, in that for you to become a citizen of Heaven you have to give up your citizenship of Hell, you have to come out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. There is no middle ground. When you're born into this world, you're born into the kingdom of darkness. The way to come out of the darkness is to become born again, by repenting of your sins and asking Jesus to come into your heart.

Jesus says this in the parable of the sower in **Matthew 13:1-9**; *“On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. 2 And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. 3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

Jesus then explains this parable continuing on in **verses 18-23**; *“18 Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

What kind of ground is your heart today? I believe the good ground is when you hear the word, you receive it, you become born again by asking Jesus to come into your heart, you repent of your sins and you become a Christian. That is good soil which will yield a harvest. Do you understand the word today? Are you hearing what the Lord is saying to you today? Are you bearing fruit today?

What makes you good ground for the word of the Lord to grow in? A farmer has to break up and till the hard ground in order for the seeds to grow, so usually it's hardness of heart that is a great hinderance to God's word taking root in your life. You've heard the expression of someone having such a hard heart that they can't hear what's being said. That's very applicable with this message.

Prayer for people is what God uses to help break up the hard heart to become soft and able to receive the word. The word is like a double-edged sword. It causes you to reason right from wrong, but you still have a decision to make with your will.

All of the rest are what the devil will use to keep the word from taking root and growing. The ones by the wayside don't understand it, they're maybe like the casual churchgoer, non-committed and on the peripheral;

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the ones whose heart would be like stony places receive it joyfully but because there is no root and persecutions and hard times come, they stumble because they're not rooted or mature in the things of the Lord; and the one whose heart is thorny can't hear what the preacher is preaching from the pulpit because their minds are on the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches. Many, many hinderances will keep you from receiving the word of the Lord today.

The Bible says in **Hosea 4:6** that God's people perish for lack of knowledge and in **2 Timothy 2:15**, Paul says; "*study to show yourself approved unto God...*" The more you understand God's word, you'll hear and receive it into your heart to bear fruit.

Our story continues saying; "*While he was speaking the bell of the engine rang, and we dashed away after dropping a few passengers, but receiving no new ones. Rattling onward through the valley, we were dazzled with the fiercely gleaming gas lamps, as before; but sometimes, in the dark or intense brightness, grim faces, that bore the aspect of individual sins or evil passions, seemed to thrust themselves through the veil of light, glaring upon us and stretching forth a great dusky hand, as if to impede our progress. These were 'freaks of imagination', nothing more, mere delusions, which I ought to be heartily ashamed of; but all through the dark Valley I was tormented and pestered, and dolefully bewildered with the same kind of waking dreams. The noxious gases of that region intoxicate the brain. As the light of the natural day however began to struggle with the glow of the lanterns, these vain imaginations lost their vividness, and finally vanished with the first ray of sunshine that greeted our escape from the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Ere we had gone a mile beyond it, I could well-nigh have taken my oath that this whole gloomy passage was a dream.*"

Has the true doctrine of eternity in hell been smoothed away and replaced with lies that it does not exist? Are you like one of the Bible believing passengers that has chosen to stay with Mr. Take-it-easy and the other acquaintances to enjoy sin for a season at the mouth of hell? It's interesting to note that only passengers were dropped off here and none were picked up. Those dropped off felt comfortable there, with their old cronies and buddies, choosing not to climb the hill to the celestial city, to sing Christian songs and to have no accountability to anyone except each other.

You can explain away all the doctrines of hell and come up with a comfortable conclusion that it doesn't exist, but it doesn't change what it says in the Bible. Whether you believe it or not does not change what it says to be true. In other words, the truth found in the Bible does not evolve around what you don't believe in and the word of God does not change to accommodate what you don't believe about it.

Jesus teaches this about the fear or reverence of God in **Luke 12:4-5**; "*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. 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!*"

God is not unstable nor doubleminded. It's not His will that anyone perish, but it's your choice where you spend eternity. The Apostle John writes this in **Revelation 20:15**; "*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

The Apostle Peter also says this in **2 Peter 3:8-9**; "*8 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. 9 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.*"

Where is your choice for eternity today?