

The Reality of Hell

Stories of Persons Who Visited Hell and Apparitions of the Damned

The Reality of Hell

One of the great dangers of this century, and thus one of the great triumphs of Satan, has been the growing disbelief in the existence of Hell. For many, Hell has become a fable, a myth, an outdated holdover from "the Old Testament God of fire, brimstone and judgment." Urged on by false doctrines and a want to believe that there can be no such thing as eternal punishment for serious wrongs "when Jesus is a God of love and kindness," many have thrown Hell out the window - along with concern for sin. After all, if there is no Hell, then why need there be concern for sin? Unfortunately, they forget that "I am the Lord and I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Hell has not suddenly evaporated because we would prefer it so. How subtle Satan is in these times. He increasingly tricks people into his web by disguising its very existence. He wants you to let your guard down. Please do not be deceived. Hell, eternal punishment for serious sins, exists. Scripture, the Church and reports of modern-day visionaries all confirm that Hell is a reality - never-ending reality for those souls who must reside there with Satan and all the other damned forever, because by their own free will and choice they rejected God while on earth and excluded themselves from communion with Him.

The Bible and Hell

There are over thirty repeated references to the existence of Hell in the Old Testament alone. For instance: "The sorrows of death have compassed me: and the perils of hell have found me" (Psalms [D-R] 114:3). "For the Lord Almighty will take revenge on them. In the day of judgment he will visit them: for he will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn, and may feel for ever" (Judith 16:20-21). "Depart from me, come not near me, because thou art unclean: these shall be smoke in my anger, a fire burning all the day" (Isaias 65:5). "A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell...I will heap evils upon the transgressors of my law, and will spend my arrows among them" (Deut.32:22-23). "The congregation of sinners is like tow heaped together, and the end of them is a flame of fire" (Ecclesiasticus 21:10). "He shall be punished for all he did, and yet shall not be consumed:...he shall burn, and every sorrow shall fall upon him...All darkness is hid in his secret places: a fire that is not kindled shall devour him" (Job 20:18,22,26).

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks of hell more than of Heaven. In St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says "But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment...And whosoever shall say, you fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (St. Matt. 5:22). "The Son of Man shall send his angels and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth" (St. Matt. 13:41-42). In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus warns: "And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire..." (St. Mark 9:42).

A description of the last judgment in the Book of Apocalypse clearly makes the point: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works. And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire" (Apoc. 20:12-15).

Jesus describes in St. Matthew's Gospel the last judgment as His separation of the sheep (those who loved God and neighbor) from the goats (those who did not). To the goats, Jesus says His indictment will be: "Depart from Me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ...And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (St. Matt. 25:41,46). Jesus Christ could not have been more clear that each of us, by our choices and conduct, risks eternal punishment after death - Hell.

Apparitions of the Damned from Hell

In Chapter 16 of the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus tells a parable on Hell. A rich man who has died and is in Hell pleads with God to send the poor man Lazarus, who has gone to Heaven, back from the dead to warn his five brothers that Hell really exists. God replies: "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." However, God is so merciful that He has reportedly allowed certain of the damned in Hell to return to earth to witness to others that there truly is a place of eternal suffering - Hell - for those who disobey God and His commandments. The following are a few examples of many such occurrences - documented in the annals of private revelation.

God's 20th Century Warnings of Hell

In the last century alone, the number of persons being chosen by God to witness the reality of Hell is greater than all prior centuries combined. Clearly, as our world moves further away from belief in sin and punishment for sin, God increases His mercy by granting us more and more confirmations of that reality.

St. Francis Jerome and the Obstinate Sinner

In the year 1707, St. Francis Jerome was preaching, as was his wont, in the neighborhood of the City of Naples. He was speaking of Hell and the awful chastisements that await obstinate sinners. A brazen courtesan (prostitute), who lived there, troubled by a discourse which aroused her remorse, sought to hinder it by jests and shouts, accompanied by noisy instruments. As she was standing close to the window, the saint cried out: "Beware, my daughter, of resisting grace; before eight days God will punish you." The unhappy creature grew only more boisterous. Eight days elapsed, and the holy preacher happened to be again before the same house. This time she was silent; the windows were shut. The hearers, with dismay on their faces, told the saint that Catherine (that was the name of the bad woman) had a few hours before died suddenly. "Died!" he repeated. "Well, let her tell us now what she has gained by laughing at Hell. Let us ask her." He uttered these

words in an inspired tone, and everyone expected a miracle. Followed by an immense crowd, he went up to the death chamber, and there, after having prayed for an instant he uncovered the face of the corpse, and said in a loud voice, "Catherine, tell us where art thou now." At this summons, the dead woman lifted her head, while opening her wild eyes; her face borrowed color, her features assumed an expression of horrible despair, and in a mournful voice, she pronounced these words: "In Hell; I am in Hell." And immediately, she fell back again into the condition of a corpse.

"I was present at that event," says one of the witnesses, "but I could never convey the impression it produced on me and the bystanders, nor that which I still feel every time I pass that house and look at that window. At the sight of that ill-fated abode, I still hear the pitiful cry resounding: 'In Hell, I am in Hell.'" With fear and trembling work out your salvation (Philip. 2:12).

Sister Josefa Menendez's Description of Hell

One of the greatest mystics of the 20th century was Sister Josefa Menendez, who died in 1923 at the age of 33. This young Spanish sister, who had a short religious life of great suffering, experienced revelations throughout much of her life, compiled in *The Way Of Divine Love*. More than once, she was taken to Hell to witness and feel the suffering first-hand. Sister Josefa was reluctant to write on the subject of Hell, and did so only to conform to Our Lord's wishes. Sister Josefa repeatedly dwelt on what she described as the greatest torment of Hell, namely, the soul's inability to love. One of these damned souls cried out: "This is my torture...that I want to love and cannot; there is nothing left me but hatred and despair. If one of us could so much as make a single act of love...But we cannot, we live on hatred and malevolence..." (March 23, 1922).

She records, too, the accusations made against themselves by these unhappy souls: "Some yell because of the martyrdom of their hands. Perhaps they were thieves, for they say: 'Where is our loot now?' ...Cursed hands... Others curse their tongues, their eyes...whatever was the occasion of sin... 'Now, O body, you are paying the price of the delights you granted yourself!...and you did it of your own free will...'" (April 2, 1922).

"I saw several souls fall into Hell, and among them was a child of fifteen, cursing her parents for not having taught her to fear God nor that there was a Hell. Her life had been a short one, she said, but full of sin, for she had given in to all that her body and passions demanded in the way of satisfaction..." (March 22, 1923).

"My soul fell into abysmal depths, the bottom of which cannot be seen, for it is immense...; Then I was pushed into one of those fiery cavities and pressed, as it were, between burning planks, and sharp nails and red-hot irons seemed to be piercing my flesh. I felt as if they were endeavoring to pull out my tongue, but could not. This torture reduced me to such agony that my very eyes seemed to be starting out of their sockets. I think this was because of the fire which burns, burns...not a finger nail escapes terrifying torments, and all the time one cannot move even a finger to gain some relief, nor change posture, for the body seems flattened out and [yet] doubled in two. Sounds of confusion and blasphemy cease not for an instant. A sickening stench asphyxiates and corrupts everything, it is like the burning of putrefied flesh, mingled with tar and sulfur...a mixture to which nothing on earth can be compared...although these tortures were terrific, they would be bearable if the soul were at peace. But it suffers indescribably...All I have written," she concluded, "is but a shadow of what the soul suffers, for no words can express such dire torment." (September 4, 1922).

"Today, I saw a vast number of people fall into the fiery pit ...they seemed to be worldlings and a demon cried vociferously: 'The world is ripe for me ...I know that the best way to get hold of souls is to rouse their desire for enjoyment ...Put me first ...me before the rest ...no humility for me! but let me enjoy myself ...This sort of thing assures victory to me ...and they tumble headlong into hell.' " (October 4, 1923)

"Tonight I was transported to a place where all was obscure...Around me were seven or eight people; I could see them only by the reflections of the fire. They were seated and were talking together. One said: 'We'll have to be very careful not to be found out, for we might easily be discovered.'

"The devil answered: 'Insinuate yourselves by inducing carelessness in them...but keep in the background, so that you are not found out...by degrees they will become callous, and you will be able to incline them to evil. Tempt these others to ambition, to self-interest, to acquiring wealth without working, whether it be lawful or not. Excite some to sensuality and love of pleasure. Let vice blind them...As to the remainder... get in through the heart ...you know the inclinations of their hearts...make them love...love passionately...work thoroughly... take no rest ...have no pity. Let them cram themselves with food! It will make it all the easier for us... Let them get on with their banqueting. Love of pleasure is the door through which you will reach them ...'" (February 3, 1923).

The Fatima Children Are Shown Hell

In 1917, during World War I and that "hell on earth," the Virgin Mary appeared to three children at Fatima, Portugal, on the 13th of the month from May through October. During her appearance on July 13th, 1917, she showed these three young children, ages 7 to 10, a vision of Hell. Lucia, the oldest of the three children, relates that the Blessed Virgin Mary opened her hands, and "rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.) The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. Terrified and as if to plead for help, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us so sadly: "You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. Thus, when you say the rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us our sins; save us from the fires of Hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need." After this vision, the children lived dramatic lives of sacrifice and penance so that sinners might be converted and saved from the fires of Hell that God had shown them through His heavenly Prophetess.

Boy Raised from the Dead by St. John Bosco

A fifteen-year-old boy in Turin was about to die. He called for Don Bosco, but the saint was not able to make it in time. Another priest heard the boy's confession and the boy died. When Don Bosco returned to Turin, he set out at once to see the boy. When told that the boy was dead, he insisted that it was "just a misunderstanding." After a moment of prayer in the room of the dead child, Don Bosco suddenly cried out: "Charles! Rise!" To the utter amazement of all present, the boy stirred, opened his eyes, and sat up. Seeing Don Bosco, his eyes lit up.

"Father, I should now be in Hell!" gasped the boy. "Two weeks ago I was with a bad companion who led me into sin and at my last confession, I was afraid to tell everything ... Oh, I've just come out of a horrible dream! I dreamt I was standing on the edge of a huge furnace surrounded by a horde of devils. They were about to throw me into the flames when a beautiful Lady appeared and stopped them. 'There's still hope for you, Charles,' she told me. 'You have not yet been judged!' At that moment I heard you calling me. Oh, Don Bosco! What a joy to see you again! Will you please hear my confession?"

After hearing the boy's confession, Don Bosco said to the boy, "Charles, now that the gates of Heaven lie wide open for you, would you rather go there or stay here with us?" The boy looked away for a moment and his eyes grew moist with tears. An expectant hush fell over the room. "Don Bosco", he said at last, "I'd rather go to Heaven." The mourners watched in amazement as Charles leaned back on the pillows, closed his eyes, and settled once more into the stillness of death.

The Old General and The Count

In Russia shortly before the horrible military campaign between Napoleon and Russia in 1812, two high-ranking military men, one a Count and the Military Governor of Moscow and the other a General, were scoffing over drinks about the existence of God, life after death and Hell. They made a mocking "pledge of honor": if there were a Hell, the first there would come to inform the other of it. A few weeks later, the General departed for the front. One morning, while the Count was lying in bed, the General suddenly appeared before him, pale, with his right hand on his breast, declaring: "What do we do now? There is a Hell and I am there! What do we do now?" He then disappeared. The Count ran to friends, eyes wild, hair on end, and exclaimed what had just happened. Two weeks later, word was received in Moscow that the General had died in battle - on the same day and at the very hour he appeared to the Count. He had kept his word of honor: Hell exists.

The Young Lord and His Mistress

In London during the winter of 1847-1848, a wealthy young widow in her late 20's suddenly found herself in an illicit relationship with a young lord. Late one night as she was falling asleep, a glimmer of light started to grow and expand at her door. To her astonishment the door started to slowly open, and there was the young lord. He approached, grabbed her left wrist, and hissed: "There is a Hell." The pain in her wrist was so great she lost consciousness. When she came to, she had a terrible burn into her wrist down to the bone. The carpet also was scorched where his footsteps had come and gone. The next day she learned that the night before, her lord had been found drunk and had died in his servants' arms. She apparently lived the rest of her life with her charred scar as a reminder.

A Soul From Hell

A widow who was a sleazy slumlord and porno dealer for 30 years became a God-fearing pillar of society overnight - after her husband paid her a visit from Hell! "I'm a changed woman," trembling Sophia Neri, 53, told reporters in Rome, Italy. "I've had a glimpse of Hell through my husband's eyes, and I'll do anything to keep from joining him there."

Before her eerie encounter, the widow operated a small empire of rat-infested slum apartments outside Rome and ran an underworld porno ring that produced magazines for sale overseas. "My husband Sal and I ran the business together before he died last year," Sophia recalled. "We lived in style, but we were living off the misery and appetites of others. After Sal died, I took over the entire operation myself and was pleased with the life I was leading."

But all that changed the day Sal appeared in Sophia's bedroom. His eyes burning like coals. "He stood before me a shrunken, broken soul, so different from the cocky, confident man I knew for 30 years," the reformed porno queen told reporters. "He told me he had been condemned to a life in Hell. He said it was far worse than anything he had imagined - and he warned me I would be joining him there if I didn't mend my ways. 'To live in Hell is to have a body that is constantly on fire,' he said. Then he pressed the palm of his hand against a heavy wooden door and his palm burned into the wood like a branding iron. A moment later he vanished leaving his handprint behind as a reminder of his warning. But believe me, that terrifying message burned itself into my mind as clearly as his handprint had burned into the door. I wasn't about to forget."

That night, Sophia visited a priest to confess her sins and beg for forgiveness. "She took me to her home and showed me the handprint on the door" [now at the Purgatorial Museum in Rome], said Father Angelo Macchi. "After seeing that and hearing her story, I have no doubt her husband paid her a visit from Hell." The next day, the shaken lady disbanded her illegal pornography operation and began turning her run-down tenement into luxury apartments, which she gave to the city to be used as low-rent housing for the poor.

"Sophia made a full confession of her activities to the police," Father Macchi said. "But so far nothing has come of it because she is living the life of a model citizen. She has given her money to charity and lives in a tiny apartment right next door to my church. She is a woman who truly has found God - and probably just in the nick of time."

Revelations of St. Teresa of Avila - Mystic, Confessor, and Doctor of the Church

"While I was at prayer one day, I found myself in a moment, without knowing how, plunged apparently into Hell. I understood that it was Our Lord's Will that I should see the place which the devils kept in readiness for me, and which I had deserved by my sins. It lasted but for a moment, but it seems to me impossible that I should ever forget it even if I were to live many years.

"The entrance seemed to be by a long narrow pass, like a furnace, very low, dark, and close. The ground seemed to be saturated with water, mere mud, exceedingly foul, sending forth pestilential odors, and covered with loathsome vermin. At the end was a hollow place in the wall like a closet, and in that I saw myself confined. All this was ever pleasant to behold in comparison with what I felt there. There is

no exaggeration in what I am saying.

"But as to what I then felt, I do not know where to begin if I were to describe it; it is utterly inexplicable. I felt a fire in my soul but such that I am still unable to describe it. My bodily sufferings were unendurable. I have undergone most painful sufferings in this life, and, as the physicians say, the greatest that can be borne, such as the contraction of my sinews when I was paralyzed, without speaking of other ills of different types - yet, even those of which I have spoken, inflicted on me by Satan; yet all these were as nothing in comparison with what I then felt, especially when I saw that there would be no intermission nor any end to them.

"These sufferings were nothing in comparison with the anguish of my soul, a sense of oppression, of stifling, and of pain so acute, accompanied by so hopeless and cruel an infliction, that I know not how to speak of it. If I say that the soul is continually being torn from the body it would be nothing - for that implies the destruction of life by the hands of another - but here it is the soul itself that is tearing itself in pieces. I cannot describe that inward fire or that despair, surpassing all torments and all pain. I did not see who it was that tormented me, but I felt myself on fire, and torn to pieces, as it seemed to me; and I repeat it, this inward fire and despair are the greatest torments of all.

"Left in that pestilential place, and utterly without the power to hope for comfort, I could neither sit nor lie down; there was no room. I was placed as it were in a hole in the wall; and those walls, terrible to look on of themselves, hemmed me in on every side. I could not breathe. There was no light, but all was thick darkness. I do not understand how it is; though there was no light, yet everything that can give pain by being seen was visible.

"Our Lord at that time would not let me see more of Hell. Afterwards I had another most fearful vision, in which I saw the punishment of certain sins. They were the most horrible to look at, but because I felt none of the pain, my terror was not so great. In the former vision Our Lord made me really feel those torments and that anguish of spirit, just as if I had been suffering them in the body there. I know not how it was, but I understood distinctly that it was a great mercy that Our Lord would have me see with my own eyes the very place from which His compassion saved me. I have listened to people speaking of these things and I have at other times dwelt on the various torments of Hell, though not often, because my soul made no progress by the way of fear; and I have read of the diverse tortures, and how the devils tear the flesh with red-hot pincers. But all is as nothing before this. It is a wholly different matter. In short, the one is a reality, the other a description; and all burning here in this life is as nothing compared with the fire that is there.

"I was so terrified by that vision - and that terror is on me even now as I write - that though it took place nearly six years ago, the natural warmth of my body is chilled by fear even now when I think of it. And so, amid all the pain and suffering which I may have had to bear, I remember no time in which I do not think that all we have to suffer in this world is as nothing. It seems to me that we complain without reason. I repeat it: this vision was one of the grandest mercies of God. It has been to me of the greatest service, because it has destroyed my fear of trouble and of the contradictions of the world, and because it has made me strong enough to bear up against them, and to give thanks to Our Lord who has been my Deliverer, as it now seems to me, from such fearful and everlasting pains.

"Ever since that time, as I was saying, everything seems endurable in comparison with one instant of suffering such as those I had then to bear in Hell. I am filled with fear when I see that, after frequently reading books which describe in some manner the pains of Hell, I was not afraid of them, nor made any account of them. Where was I? How could I possibly take any pleasure in those things which led me directly to so dreadful a place? Blessed forever be Thou, O my God! And oh, how manifest is it that Thou didst love me much more than I did love Thee! How often, O Lord, didst Thou save me from that fearful prison! And how I used to get back to it contrary to Thy Will.

"It was that vision which filled me with very great distress which I felt at the sight of so many lost souls, especially of the Lutherans - for they were once members of the Church by Baptism - and also gave me the most vehement desires for the salvation of souls; for certainly I believe that to save even one from those overwhelming torments, I would willingly endure many deaths. If here on earth we see one whom we specially love in great trouble or pain, our very nature seems to bid us compassionate him; and if those pains be great, we are troubled ourselves. What, then, must it be to see a soul in danger of pain, the most grievous of all pains, forever? It is a thought no heart can bear without great anguish. Here we know that pain at last ends with life, and that there are limits to it, yet the sight of it moves us so greatly to compassion; that other pain has no ending, and I know not how we can be calm when we see Satan carry so many souls daily away.

"This also makes me wish that, in a matter which concerns us so much, we did not rest satisfied with doing less than we can do on our part - that we left nothing undone. May Our Lord vouchsafe to give us His Grace for that end."

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Dear fellow Christians, Father Lombardi, in his public debate with Italian Communist leader Velio Spano in Cagliari on December 4, 1948, stated, "I am horror-struck at the thought that if you continue in this manner, you will be condemned to hell." Spano replied, "I do not believe in hell." Father Lombardi replied, "Precisely, and if you continue, you will be condemned; for to avoid being condemned, one must believe in hell." Hell is a grave reality that is easily forgotten in today's Godless and apathetic society. This is all the more reason why we should fear for our salvation and do all that we can to make sure that we are one of the elect. St. Leonard of Port Maurice said, "To be saved for all eternity, to be damned for all eternity, and to not make your every effort to avoid the one and make sure of the other, is something inconceivable." Do not let your life pass before it is too late; focus on saving your soul to the exclusion of all other things, lest you find yourself forever in the eternal fires after your judgment.

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins; save us from the fires of Hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need. Amen.

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