



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 1/Issue 13

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

This week's reading is Psalm 76 (ESV).
Titled, Who Can Stand Before You?

**TO THE CHOIRMASTER:
WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A
PSALM OF ASAPH. A SONG.**

In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.² His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.³ There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. *Selah*

⁴ Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains full of prey.⁵ The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; all the men of war were unable to use their hands.⁶ At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned.⁷ But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?⁸ From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still,⁹ when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. *Selah*

¹⁰ Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.¹¹ Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them;

let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared,¹² who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.

This psalm is a hymn celebrating Zion as the place God has chosen to dwell, and the capital of the people he has chosen to bless and protect. The psalm is suited to the occasion like ours in which God is delivering us from this virus, and we, as a congregation, can marvel at the privilege of being able to gather once more and thank God for it.

We need to keep this before us. The Church has not been closed, so it doesn't need to be re-opened. We have simply stopped worshipping in our building for a time to protect the health and well-being of our congregation and our communities. The Church is the people not a building. What is required is love, compassion and the presence of God.

Join us for our first Sunday back in the building. Refer to the "Church Re-opening" document outlining the process.

Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

One tap mobile

+13126266799

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807



The Watchman's Notes
Offering biblical messages, perspectives
and views on

Biblical & moral issues and current
events.
A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor – Bible
Teacher
"For thus the Lord said to me: Go, set a
watchman; let him announce what he
sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]

June 4, 2020 – Issue #13

Dear friends:

I recently wrote two issues of The Watchman's Notes on the topic of, "The Reality of Evil and Spiritual Warfare." This week's issue is on "Hell." Evil, Spirituat Warfare, and Hell make for a *trilogy* on topics that most people, even Christians, avoid or are not taught. No Pastor or Elder Board of a Church ever asks a substitute pastor doing pulpit supply to preach on these topics.

Just as there is a Heaven - there is also a Hell. If you disagree, take it up with Jesus! A reminder to all of us Christ followers: the Bible consistently teaches that the Spirit/Soul of the righteous dead [God's Holy Ones, His Saints] at the moment of death will transition or pass on immediately to be with Jesus in the presence of God for eternity [2 Cor.5:7...: Phil. 1:21- 23, Psalm 116:15]. *The others are bound for Hell.* Perhaps we need to make this more known?

A question we all need, as *the Church*, to answer today is:

ARE WE DOING ENOUGH AS BELIEVERS AND AS THE CHURCH TODAY TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM GOING TO HELL?

"Hell, Yes or Hell, No?"

Read (Luke 16:19-31) (NIV or ESV). Some of you are thinking, why teach about Hell? It's such a negative topic. *It's a real downer – no pun intended!* The simple answer to the why question is because most people haven't heard or read a message on Hell in a long, long time, if ever! *What about Heaven? What about Hell?* Are these real places? Or are they just symbols that point to the universal longing for immortality? Listen – if there's a Heaven – you can bet there's a Hell. [Think of the Law of opposites: good/evil; up/down; day/night; God/Satan] Is it: Hell, Yes or is it Hell, No for you?

"What happens when we die?" Is there an afterlife? If so, what is the destination? For thousands of years – men and women have pondered this question and have offered a myriad of views or answers.

The Materialist [Atheism]– says there is no such thing as a soul or spirit or God; when we die, we simply cease to exist.

The Reincarnationist – believes that after we die, we come back to earth in another life form, either higher or lower depending on how we lived in this life. (a very small percentage of people believe this)

The Universalist – argues that since a loving God would never send anyone to Hell, everyone eventually ends up in Heaven. (Larger percentage of people hope this is true).

The Second-Chance Salvationist – says that those who didn't believe in Christ in this life get a second chance after death.

The Annihilationist – says that believers go to heaven, while unbelievers are destroyed by God.

The Probationist – believes that everyone goes to a place called *purgatory* where we pay for our own sinful acts and people pray for us until we have purged ourselves, and then one day we enter heaven. (How many prayers does it take to pray someone into Heaven?)

The Biblical Christian (the true Christ follower) believes there are only two destinations awaiting mankind after death. It's either Heaven or it's Hell! You get to choose!

Now I know everyone has an opinion! But as I've said many times before – everybody may have an opinion and everybody has a right to their own opinion – BUT not every opinion is RIGHT or is true! I appreciate an opinion that is based on *something* – like facts, evidence, or truth! One's opinion doesn't mean anything if it doesn't have some basis of truth or credibility. All of the listed perspectives above have no basis for truth or credibility – except for the Biblical perspective.

The question of the afterlife is an ancient one. It was the prophet (Job 14:14) who asked the questions thousands of years ago, "If a man dies, will he live again?" At every funeral that question is asked in one way or another. Is there life after death? If so, what happens when we die? How can we know for sure?

Who believes in Hell today? Hell is not a popular topic today – not on TV talk shows, not in the media or Hollywood and not in a lot of Churches either.

According to Lifeway Research, Nashville, TN [2016] – *Americans Love God and the Bible – But are fuzzy on the details*. Evangelical Believers in Christ say Hell is for real. Other Americans aren't so sure. Hell is described as an eternal place of judgment where God sends all people and the Devil, who do not personally trust in Jesus Christ. In general, only 40% of Americans believe in this definition of Hell. Whereas, *Evangelical Believers in Christ*, about 80% believe in Hell.

Other surveys revealed that more women believed "they" were going to heaven than men – 81% against 73% [8% difference]. As far as going to Hell – only 3% of the women thought they would end up in Hell – while 5% of the men thought they would end up in Hell. Survey percentages are always questionable. However, I believe it is safe to say that the more one trusts in Jesus and in the Bible as God's truth – the more belief they have in Heaven and Hell.

Today, most Americans still believe in Heaven, and most are planning to go there – but many are confused as to how they will get there. Most of us believe in Hell, but almost no one expects to go there – so we're also confused on this subject.

People need to know the truth – and we can. However, we can't base our hope for the future on opinion polls or surveys. We need to know the facts, the evidence, and the truth. In all the world there is only one source of authoritative information concerning the afterlife. It's the Bible, the Word of God – everything else outside of the Bible is only *speculation, opinion or wishful thinking.*

Is there really such a thing or place as Hell?

The Bible assures us that Hell is a real place. However, Hell was not part of God's original creation. *Remember, God's verdict was that His original creation was very good. (Genesis 1:31).* Hell was created later to accommodate the banishment of Satan and his fallen angels who rebelled against God (*"...into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,"*) (Matthew 25:41). Human beings who reject Christ will join Satan and his fallen angels in the infernal place of suffering. (Luke 16:19-31)

What did Jesus say about Hell?

This is the testimony of Jesus Himself on the subject – One of two destinies await each human being after death – *Eternal life in Heaven or Eternal condemnation in Hell.* Jesus refers to Hell as a *literal place* and describes it in graphic terms – including raging fires. Christ says the unsaved, *"will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matthew 8:12).

Consider these words of Jesus Christ, *"A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."* (John 5:28-29) (See also Matthew 10:28; 13:40-42; Mark 9:43-44)

In the story of the rich man and a beggar named Lazarus in (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus taught that in Hell, the wicked suffer terribly, are fully conscious, retain their desires and memories and reasoning, long for relief, cannot be comforted, cannot leave their torment, and are lacking hope. This story told by Jesus was to teach a lesson for the benefit of the

Pharisees (the Religious Leaders). Note the contrast: a Rich man (Perhaps a Religious Pharisee) who has everything is on one side of the gate - and on the other side of the gate is a *beggar* (named Lazarus), who has nothing, lying in misery. Inside the gate a person feasts – outside the gate, a person starves. And from above, God renders a verdict. The curtain of death falls. Both die (vs. 22-23) - *"The rich man was in Hell, where he was in torment."*

As the curtain is raised - there is a reversal of destiny. Lazarus [not the brother of Mary & Martha] died and was carried to the arms of Abraham by the angels. The rich man died and was buried - but now he is in much pain. Vs 24-25 -v. 28 – a place of pain. Don't miss the reality of Hell here – the citizens of Hell are awake, they ask questions, they speak, they plead, and they have the knowledge that the suffering will never end, it is eternal punishment. The Savior could not have painted a more bleak or graphic picture for us.

Some people have great trouble with this story because they reject the notion that Jesus believed in a literal Hell with literal fire. But here Jesus plainly teaches that the rich man was tormented in the fires of Hell. I find nothing in the text to suggest that this is symbolic or an allegory. It appears to be an actual description of Hell. It seems to me that if one believes in and follows Jesus, one must have to believe in Hell. If I had a choice in the matter; that is, if Scripture were not so clear and conclusive, I would certainly not believe in Hell. Trust me when I say I do not want to believe in Hell. However, the Biblical teaching on both destinations, Heaven and Hell, stands or falls together. We cannot repudiate Hell without altogether repudiating Christ.

Someone has called "Hell" the forgotten doctrine of the Christian church because we don't talk about it nowadays. It's not popular or politically correct to suggest that *unbelievers* [the lost], the many who are listed in the obituary pages every day of the week who die without Christ, those who reject Jesus Christ, *are headed for Hell, to be tormented for all eternity for their sins – separated from God.* We want to soften the blow, so to speak, so people come up with all kinds of other opinions or *rationale to debunk the doctrine of Hell!*

NOTE: "Hades" was the Greek word used in the N.T. for the "place or abode of the dead." In the O.T. the Hebrew word "Sheol" meant "the realm of the dead." Hades & Sheol were divided into two parts – one part for the souls of the righteous and the other part for the souls of the wicked, separated by an impassable chasm.

Another important N.T. word used for Hell [in the Greek] is the word, 'Gehenna' (found in Matt. 10:28). This word has an interesting history. For several generations in ancient Israel, atrocities were committed in the Valley of Ben Hinnom – human sacrifices, even sacrifices of children (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 32:35). These victims were sacrificed to the false god of the Moabites called Molech. Jeremiah called this valley, "the Valley of Slaughter."

Eventually the valley became a "rubbish dump" into which all the filth/garbage in Jerusalem was dumped. Not only garbage – but dead animals and the corpses of criminals were thrown into a heap and perpetually burned up. The fires never stopped burning.

The place was called in Hebrew, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom," and later shortened to "Ge-Hinnom." The Greek

translation of this Hebrew phrase is "Gehenna." Jesus used this word about 11 times Himself. No one spoke more of Hell than Jesus did.

The Bible uses a variety of words to describe the horrors of Hell – including fire, smoke, fiery furnace, unquenchable fire, the lake of burning sulfur, the lake of fire, everlasting contempt, perdition, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, eternal punishment, darkness, the wrath to come, bottomless pit, torment, damnation, condemnation, retribution, woe, and the second death. Hell [Gehenna] is a horrible destiny.

(Revelation 20:11-15) – describes the awesome scene surrounding the Great White Throne Judgment at the End Time [the end of Jesus' literal 1000 year reign on the earth] - This is the final judgment when all those who have rejected Jesus Christ will have their day in Court before the final Judge (Jesus Christ, John 5:22-23; Acts 17:31, 2 Tim. 4:1).

It will take place after the 1000 years Reign of Christ on the earth and after Satan has been cast into the Lake of Fire – *It is an awesome picture to comprehend!* In this passage we discover the final destination of those who will not accept Jesus by Faith, those who will not bow before Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. There will be a Judge, but no jury – a prosecution but no defense – a sentence but no appeal. The gavel of God will bang, and the lost will have no appeal. The verdict will stand for all eternity. The sentence at this judgment will be the harshest sentence ever imagined – eternal life in Hell forever, without parole.

Some of the saddest and worst verses in the Bible are found in (Mark 9:42-48); (Revelation 14:11) and (Rev.21:6-8) Using words and phrases such as – "It is better to enter life maimed than to go

into Hell," "he will be tormented with burning sulfur and the some of their torment rises for ever and ever," "the fiery Lake of burning sulfur." Imagine a lake filled with fire and burning smoke. It's too late for repentance, too late for remorse, too late to give one's heart to Jesus. *The Bible calls this "the second death."* It is the final destination of those who left this life without receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

I know some will explain this away by saying this is not a *literal fire* – it is a metaphor [a figure of speech] to express the great wrath of God. Listen, the Bible tells us that, "the Lord God is a consuming fire – that His wrath is poured out like a fire – Who can stand when He appears for, He will be like a refiner's fire." God said, "My wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done." Think what you will – but I believe the lake of fire is real, and I am sure the reality of Hell is far worse than my words or any human words portray. If people read and fully understood the truth of the Bible – *it would scare the Hell out of them! (Pun intended)*

How could a loving God send people to Hell?

The entire question is wrong. A better wording is: "If God is love, then why do some people go to Hell?"

The Truth is: God doesn't send anyone to Hell. God doesn't send people to Hell. He simply honors their choice. That's why He sent Jesus, His Son, to pay the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross (John 3:16, 17). Unfortunately, not all people are willing to admit they sin and have the need for forgiveness. They don't accept the payment of Jesus' death for them. Recognize that people actively "suppress the truth." People have been given enough truth to know and

surrender to God, but they refuse it. (Romans 1:18-20) Therefore, God lets them experience the results of their choice [that's the point of Luke 16].

Hell is the ultimate expression of God's high regard [love] for the dignity of man. He has never forced any of us to choose Him – even when that means we would choose Hell. By the way, innocent people do not go to Hell – sinners go to Hell. The Bible does not teach that innocent people are condemned – Sinners are condemned – the rebellious go to Hell. We choose our destiny – God doesn't. There is only one requirement for Hell – unbelief. Only one sin damns us – unbelief (John 3:18, 19). Never forget that while on the cross, Jesus became sin for us. (2 Cor. 5:21) says, “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Does Hell serve a purpose?

What do we gain by knowing about Hell, and why is this important to the Christian faith? Well, if there is no Hell – then God is NOT Just! If there is no punishment of sin – what shall we say about the people who commit murder, rape, terrorize, drug pushers, adulterers, pornographers, child predators, slave traders, child predators, those who cheat others, those who take advantage of the elderly, mass murderers, political corruption, abuse of power, dictators, those nations and leaders who want to wipe out God's chosen people from the face of the earth? So many crimes and so much evil go unpunished in this lifetime – and the perpetrators are free and loose to hurt others- without judgment or punishment? That seems quite unfair and unjust!

If there is no Hell – then God is blind toward the victims and has turned His back on those who pray and hope for

relief. If there is no punishment for evil or wrath toward evil – then God is not love – for love hates that which is evil. To say there is no Hell is also to say God is a liar and His Word is untrue. Hell must exist, if for no other reason than to balance the scales of justice – to right the wrongs of this life! Just as Heaven exists to reward all those faithful servants who give their whole life in serving the Lord and to redeem the sufferings of this life. When the books are opened and the scales are balanced at the end times – we will discover that the things of this life that we went through are nothing compared with the glories of Heaven.

God gave us the freedom to choose how we respond to Him. If He forced us to love Him, we would be robots or drones. To give us no option but obedience would be a violation of our free will. Love is only love when it is voluntary. We cannot love God unless we have the option of not loving Him. Because God honors our autonomy, He will never force surrender or loyalty. However, there are consequences for either choice.

What it all means for you and me? Well - is it *Hell* yes for you? Or is it *Hell* no for you?

One day (our day) is coming – for the Bible says, “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27) – that's one appointment no one will miss! You have one of two destinies after death. If you are a true Biblical Christian, a true follower of Christ, according to the Biblical teaching of what a Christian is – you win! The Christian wins everything because he/she goes to Heaven.

The atheist, the agnostic, the unbeliever, the one who rejects Christ as Savior and Lord loses. He/she goes to Hell. Those who reject Christ run a terrible risk – that

Hell is real – because if it is, and the Bible says it is – that's where they are going. The choice is yours!

God loves us enough to tell us the truth! There are two eternal destinations, not one, and we must choose the right path if we are to go to Heaven. All roads do not lead to Heaven. Only one does: Jesus Christ. He said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). All other roads lead to Hell. Jesus also said in (Matt. 25:46), “Then they will go away to Eternal punishment, but the righteous to Eternal life.” Do I have an Amen?

Pastor Vitel poses an important question at the beginning of his message this week, “ARE WE DOING ENOUGH AS BELIEVERS AND AS THE CHURCH TODAY TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM GOING TO HELL?”

As Christians, we are God's instruments in disseminating the gospel to the lost. What we all need to be striving for is to be God's skin on earth because we all have this job to perform. How? Before we can answer the how, we need to begin with answering the why? Sunday, May 31 we celebrated Pentecost the day not the street in Northbrook (PFINGSTON).

Pentecost is God pouring out God's Spirit upon his people. Thereby,

The disciple, the one who truly listens and learns, will put into practice what he learns.

equipping His church with the power of His Spirit so that He will be glorified among the nations. The following is taken from a message by Pastor Steven J. Cole, “God's purpose at Pentecost was to equip His church with the mighty power of the Holy Spirit so that we would be His witnesses to all the nations, resulting in His eternal glory. I want you to ask yourself these questions as you think about this purpose:

*(1) *Is my focus on God's glory in all things? Did I even think about that as I went through my week? Did it determine how I resisted temptation or how I spoke to others?*

*(2) *Is my passion that the nations would glorify God through the gospel? If my heart is not on world missions, it is not in tune with God's heart.*

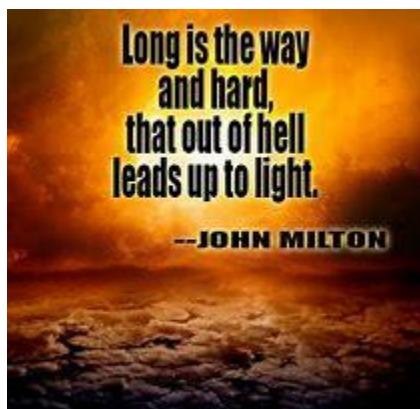
*(3) *Is my daily life consciously dependent on the Holy Spirit? Would I have missed Him if He had withdrawn from me this past week? Do I lean on Him for purity of life and power to obey God?*

*(4) *Is my daily desire to bear witness of Christ to those who are lost and perishing? The power of the Spirit isn't given just to make me happy. It is given to make me holy so that my life and my words bring glory to God as I bear witness to His saving grace. That should be the meaning of Pentecost for you and me."*

This past Pentecost Sunday we lamented over the violence that was spreading across our country. In this moment, as cities fester and protesters gather to demonstrate and cry out, we need to remember the promise of Pentecost that, in Christ, the living God in stubborn love, is knitting together a renewed humanity not defined by race, skin color, class, or culture, but by grace — that's a Gospel we need urgently. As some of us gathered remotely on that Sunday morning, Brian Mitchell shared the following three leadership points that we can adopt to ensure that we are doing all we can in getting the gospel out. These dovetail into Pastor Vitel's urgent challenge and Pastor Coles four questions.

1. Plan your work. (begin with the end in mind.) As we once again begin to have more human interactions, as we gain more freedom and we engage in conversations where the topics of the virus and social unrest are sure to come up, we need to be prepared to answer these questions biblically.

2. Work your plan. Don't be reluctant to have a biblical response to conversations. Christ is still on the throne and He has a plan.
3. Don't get side-tracked. Our responses need to be biblical not political.





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss:

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19. The family of Mary Grace Reyes.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs:

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, **Gloria-Lynn Fernandez special request**, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria, Anne Benliro's co-worker's husband—Oscar with Covid-19.

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor Chuck and Sue Vitel

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:

Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman

✓ Continuing Prayers for:

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman living together at The Wellshire Nursing Home

Mylin and Errol Lardizabal - Are both nurses and Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month.

Liza Mitchell in her role as a health care worker at Vi Independent and Assisted Living Facility she has responsibility over those with Covid 19 .

Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect.

Rita McManus - Has been under the weather. Visited doctor. Reported NO Covid19.

George Bizadellis – Salvation. Brian has been witnessing to him.

Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic.

Carmen Pearson – Her younger sister passed away. Pray for Carmen and her family.

George Sargis as he recovers from eye surgery.

Carol Riemers family

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family, we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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The "new normal" to protect the health and well-being of our congregation and our communities.

