

# RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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“...and it shall be forgiven him.” What beautiful words! There is assurance in that statement. These words “...and it shall be forgiven him,” are found in the heart of the Law, these words are the ending of Leviticus chapter 4, verses 20, 26, 31, and 35; Leviticus chapter 5: verses 10, 16, and 18, and they are also included in Leviticus chapter 5, verse 13; chapter 6, verse 7. The Law has established that the price for sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. It is a stiff price, unbendable, unyielding, inflexible. But, within that same Law, God has also established a way out for that sinner, the substitute death. When the sinner brings the lamb, or the goat or the bullock (and for those who could not afford expensive animals, even a couple of doves or a few pounds of flour were eligible as a substitute sacrifice) the same Law that condemns declares that when that person brings the payment for the trespass, that trespass “shall be forgiven him.” There is no qualification, there are no caveats, there is no worthiness that must be attained before appropriating the sacrifice. It is a complete, thorough, comprehensive, all encompassing, absolutely reliable forgiveness, pardon, atonement. The quid pro quo of a clear and straight transaction: You give me the money I’ll give you the ticket, you bring me the sacrifice I’ll call you clean, as clean as my own beloved son, who himself is the sacrifice. This is the unbreakable covenant, a covenant that he wrote himself in a very specific, clear, exact way. It is a marvelous thing to ponder eternal life.

Ultimately, we are talking about Heaven and Hell, or better yet, Heaven *or* Hell. Believing on these things happens at various levels. Some people may sort of believe that Heaven exists and at the same time they may think it could be boring. Personally, I don’t think so. But who am I to say? I am totally biased. My opinion cannot be trusted. Nevertheless, it is God who says that there will be a *new* Heaven and a *new* Earth. He does not say that there will be a *different* Heaven and a *different* Earth. When God made the Heavens and the Earth he said it was good. When God says “good” God means that it is just the way he wanted it. In other words, the Creation of God was perfect. If that is the case and the Earth and the rest of the Universe will be renewed, it sounds to me like it is going to be like, or a return to, the original creation. If that were the case and the Universe were to be like it is today, the enormous distances between celestial bodies (stars, galaxies,

etc.) would still exist, but with eternal life we would be able to explore those distant galaxies, having eternal life would allow us to cover those enormous distances.

But let's just say that Heaven could be boring, what can be done about it? Is there a choice to Heaven? Well, I suppose so. One could always say, yea, sure there is a choice, I can go to Hell. I don't know about that, from where I am, it doesn't seem like a terribly good idea. Other people, probably most, think that the very idea of Hell is a joke. Hell does not exist. Hell is something invented by religions to scare people into obedience, to bring people under control. Hell simply does not exist, it's a myth, it is a way to represent suffering which is nothing more than the human condition. Hell is an imaginary place, a concept that tries to explain away guilt, the awareness of deserving punishment. Of course, if a person really believed that Hell exists they wouldn't take any chances. Yet others think that even if Hell exists they can probably handle it. It won't be so bad they say, the real Hell is here on Earth. Oh, yeah, this is so bad, the suffering, the lack, the want, the unfairness. Life right here right now is what is so bad, this life is Hell and there is no other Hell. Ideas about Hell abound. Maybe Hell is just a transitory thing, part of the wheel of life, birth, death, rebirth, onwards and upwards exploring new worlds and dimensions. People can believe what they like. I believe this, you believe that. What's the difference? All belief systems lead to God. All belief systems are the same. Yea, sure, people can believe what they like, but are all belief systems the same? I don't know. I've looked and looked and I still cannot be sure that Hell does not exist, what if Hell really exists and it is not fun? What if Hell is the final stage, where there is a suffering that involves weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? And how long will it last? Part of that suffering will be wanting to die but not being able to. At some point, Death and Hell will be thrown into the lake of fire. If this lake of fire is a consuming fire such that will destroy anything in it, Death and Hell will not last forever. The first part, Death, has already been defeated, it happened when Jesus came back from the dead. But it is still active as so many people die unsaved. The second part, Hell, is more ambiguous. If Hell is destroyed in the lake of fire everyone in it would be destroyed as well, no question about that, but the level of punishment, length, intensity, cannot be the same for everyone who ends over there. When the Law says "an eye for an eye" it is establishing a limit to the punishment, God is saying that the punishment cannot exceed the crime. The Law of God does not say "two eyes for an eye." Therefore, the little accountant down the street who waters his flowers on the window cannot receive the same punishment as Hitler, Stalin, Pol-Pot, etc, despots who murdered millions of people and caused great misery to many

more millions. But even that little accountant who never did anything anywhere near like what those murderers did and who, in fact, was a really nice person, even he, regrettable as it is, will end up in the lake of fire if he does not have Christ as the payment for his sin.

There are many today who are in the jail of Satan solely because they don't know that the sacrifice has been made.

There is so much I don't know..., and I'm so paranoid I don't trust anybody to tell me. Why the paranoia? Paranoia means to mistrust, to be suspicious. Why the mistrust and the suspiciousness? Well, basically, because knowing my heart I know what lies in the heart of men, nothing good to be sure. All my trust is in the word of God. The nature of humans is to be covetous, larcenous, false foundations, no sure steps. I believe in the worst of human nature. I also believe that God can transform the worst of human nature. Not all of the worse of human nature is useless. There is something in there, the same energy that foments rebellion, the same energy that resists God, our own stiff-neckedness, there is a kind of steeliness there that once it is transformed God can put to good use. Out of the flotsam, riches for him.

The difference between the word of God and the word of men is that God is consistent and men are not. God does not change from what he first told us, men are always making new inventions. You want to be saved? Stand on your head and thou shall be saved. O.K., now that you can stand on your head you have to go to the next level. Now you have to eat an ice cream while you stand on your head. Hmmm, that's not too bad. But as you continue in your purification to be pleasing to God, now, while on your head eating your ice cream you have to sing "O Sole Mio," and then, then, we can see your progress. We are watching you. We are going to keep tabs on you to see how you are doing.

I am so grateful to God. Please, don't give me religion. No religion. He is consistent, faithful, never wavering; he says what he has to say and does not change it later. His demands are up front, there are no surprises with him. He is entirely reliable, what a good thing that is! It is good because no one has to guess at what he means. His benefits are many, some are here now, many more others are in eternal life.

When a person becomes saved and sees that everything he has accomplished in life is not his own doing, is not by the power of his own hand, that can be a big blessing. Because then he knows that God has loved him all along, he sees the guidance of God and the protection of God, in times when he didn't know the difference between his nostrils and a hole in the ground.

Numbers 15, 27-28, “And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering.

And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.”

A certain man gave a great supper and bade many. Everything was laid out just right, he was expectant. He called the guests to the feast but they all with one consent began to make excuse. They all had good reasons. One had to go see a piece of property he had just purchased, another had to go check out some oxen he had just bought, another said he was just married and could not attend.

So, here is the host having prepared this sumptuous feast (eternal life, no less), and everybody was too busy to attend. An incredible disdain for the immeasurable gift of life, when you are blind you cannot see. They all made light of the banquet, and went their ways. What is the host to do? He tells his servants to go to the streets and lanes of the city, and the highways and hedges to find the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Go find the most wretched people you can find and bring them to my banquet.

Those who walked away from the banquet probably thought that the banquet was going to be boring, meh, a banquet, bland food, big deal. I gotta go see that property I just bought, see how much rent I can get for it. That’s more important to me than this banquet. One way or the other those who were bidden would not come. And, as a friend of mine would say, “Is that happening today?” I would say yes, it is happening today. The banquet is there for the taking with the full gladness and urging of God to attend but they (we) would not. They have the food in their mouth and they spit it out. I did the same thing, now I don’t understand how I could have been so impervious to his entreaties, but I was.

Will Heaven be boring? Of course, *I totally know* that it will not be boring, but again, my opinion is completely biased. I am blind and deaf past my conviction. However, aside from the entertainment factor of exploring new worlds etc., the whole equation is reduced to one of the two: Heaven or Hell with nothing in between. Will Heaven be boring? Will Hell be tolerable? No, to both.

This is the deal, the deal is that choosing between Heaven and Hell seems pretty easy to me. There is no way to know that Hell does not exist. Heaven is better, Hell is worse. Understatement is good for the brain.