

Is it funny?



The other day I was reading some jokes about the pearly gates of Heaven. Here is one that really amused me:-

Two hoodies arrived at the gates and asked if they could come in. The reply was, "Well, I am not sure about that; you have been very bad lying and stealing so I will have to go and ask God if I can let you in." God answered, "We can't be judgmental, let them in if they are really sorry for what they have done."

When I went back to give them the answer, they had gone – and so had the pearly gates!

I then sat doing my embroidery and chuckling to myself about some of the jokes when I suddenly felt God say to me, "It is a serious matter and not something to joke about."

Over the years that I have been attending church I have often heard about Heaven but I do not recall ever hearing much said about Hell. In general, English people are very reluctant to talk about anything to do with death. We do not say that people have died but use euphemisms such as, 'Gone to be with the Lord, Gone to glory, Gone to Jesus, Gone home, Passed, Departed this life, Snuffed it.'

What does the Bible say about Heaven?

It sounds like a really lovely place. What will it be like? We are told that we will have a new body but I expect that we mostly think about this in physical terms because that is what it is to us. Will it be a spiritual body rather than a physical one? Difficult for us to imagine. God has prepared a place for us that has many rooms. (I am hoping that he only gives me one of them though as I do not fancy having to clean lots of them!) We are told that there is no more death and no more tears, so that will be brilliant. We will be able to continually worship God. Paul writes that we will be with those whom we know and will be in the presence of Jesus. (2 Cor. 4: 13 – 14)



What does the Bible say about Hell?



Not a nice place.

A place of torment, a place of continual fire, a place of anguish.

Away from God's presence.

How long will we be in Heaven or Hell?

Time will have no ending. I am in my 80's and sometimes feel that I have been around for a long time, but, Heaven and Hell will be there for years and years and years and.....

10,000 years?

100,000,000 years?

Eternity means for ever. We have no concept of that as we are only able to think in terms of the years that we ourselves have lived. Eternity sounds fine for those who will be in Heaven, but, not at all good for those who will be in Hell.

Can we swap from one to the other?

As Christians we believe that our destiny is decided at the point of death. After that point has been reached then there is not the opportunity to change from Hell to Heaven. There is nothing that we can do, either on our own behalf or on behalf of others, to cause a change to be made. We are unable to pray anyone out of Hell into Heaven and neither does going through Water Baptism in proxy for those who have already died, result in that transference. The Bible tells of a 'great chasm' between the two places and that no-one can cross from one to the other. (Luke 16: 19 – 31)

What is the deciding factor?

Does being a good person, helping others and giving to charity get us into Heaven – NO

Does church attendance get us into Heaven – NO

Does having Christian parents get us into Heaven – NO

Does being baptised in water get us to Heaven – NO. (Water Baptism is a public recognition that we have accepted Jesus as Saviour, but is not in itself something that saves us from going to Hell.)

The only thing that gives us assurance of being in eternity in God's presence is if we have accepted Jesus as Saviour. That decision can be made at any point in our lives – Even during the last few seconds of life on this earth. If we are really sorry for some of the things that we have done and said in our lives, then we can receive God's forgiveness. No-one is too bad to become a Christian, no age limit, no payment. What Jesus did for us when He died on the cross opened the way for anyone and everyone to go to Heaven.



So, how serious a matter is it?

Much more serious than most of us think. It is definitely not a thing to joke about. I do not want to think that any of my family will be spending eternity in Hell. In fact, as Christians, we should not want anyone to go to Hell. I am sure that Jesus did not think that it was a joke when He was hanging on that cross in order to prevent us all going to Hell. What do you think?

