

HOW TO GET TO HELL[®]

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I address below a subject I hate. Usually, I speak on topics I wish to present and promote, a product that could be marketed and sold, but today, I speak on a subject that I hate with everything I've got. Simply because I deserve to go there, and wish you were not going there. You know the topic from my title— "hell"— a product that cannot be marketed or sold, except for the lightest, metaphorical versions of it. This is a talk on how to get to hell, without even trying. Not on how to go to hell, for that would be too rude and offensive, but how to get to hell, in my opinion "The Worst Four Letter Word" in the English language. You can get there without even trying.

The Worst Obscenity

You know English four-letter-words—vulgar and offensive, profane and monosyllabic. Several of these words are not permitted in public discourse and their use actually shows the coarseness of a person and the culture he presents. We finally fail to notice the obscenities. These bad words become so natural that you don't even apologize for their use.

More often we use four-letter-words to denote whatever is hard-to-do or unpleasant. For example, If I gave you a "fill in the blank" exercise:
_____ is hell. Some think life is hell; or business is hell; work is hell; marriage is hell; men are hell; women are hell; children are hell; parents are hell; colleagues are hell; golf is hell. Someone said they called the frustrating game "golf" because all the other four letter words were taken!

Though its shock value has been depleted, *hell* is the worst of all four letter words. We use "hell" pretty nonchalantly, while other four letter words more guardedly in public. There is actually a village called "Hell" in the Grand Cayman Islands of the beautiful Caribbean part of the world. Tourists tell the usual jokes like, "I am going to Hell today; or I've been to Hell and back," and keep people amused by sending postcards from "hell."

However, the hell I am talking about is not a place of choice; nor a vacation destination. I want to apologize for addressing it at all. In one way, I am grateful it's not banned from public vocabulary, so I can use it repeatedly in

its most serious sense. Unfortunately, hearing it often has taken off the edge of its shameless meaning, its offensive reality.

I'm not here to tell you to go hell—that would be none of my business. I am probing the question of “how to get to hell” in somewhat a detached, rigorous, ethical, analytical and tenacious way, simply to give you directions away from hell. Think of this message as receiving a “save-the-date” post-card from hell, but you can reverse your destination.

I may not be able to banish it from public discourse, but I'd like to forever banish it from your personal experience. To eliminate it from your present experience, and from your personal future is my wish. Yes, hell is printable, unlike other four letter words which are not appropriate, but I want to show you why “hell” is the most vulgar of all four-letter-words, and should be banned from our consciousness forever!

THREE AUDIENCES

Already, I am identifying three kinds of readers, listeners, and viewers...three kinds on the “critical mind” spectrum, the range of “thoughtful belief” on the matter of hell as an after-life plausibility, possibility, and probability... for those who would consider it carefully. Let me describe the three points to the “critical mind” continuum:

The Skeptic: You will not believe in hell, regardless of the evidence. You hold that hell is plausible, but is likely false. You have a strong sense of justice, since you are concerned about all those who will be unjustly sent to hell. You also ask why there should be eternal punishment for temporal sins. The critical skeptic is his own best authority on the subject.

“There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoying life”—declared the atheist bus campaign in the UK in 2008. If they had changed the word “God” to “hell” to “there’s probably no hell. Now stop worrying and enjoying life,” the message wouldn’t get very far. We would really start worrying and stop enjoying life. Why? That kind of “probability” about hell is too much of risk, based on ignorance, and is not good enough as a rational argument. Neither does it provide emotional assurance when considering after-life possibilities.

Skeptics are skeptical about every thing else, except themselves! They are not very good at self-criticism. I encourage them to engage in some self-skepticism.

You may not be a skeptic when it comes to hell, you may fit the second category on the critical mind spectrum.

The Doubter. You are not a whimsical or selfish doubter. You are a thoughtful doubter. You have questions, but will withhold judgment. You would believe in the possibility of hell if there was good information. You realize that life-after-death is a great question, "maybe the greatest mystery of all and in the end the only one that matters," since the stakes are too high. You are willing to consider authorities other than yourself on a matter in which you yourself have limited information. As a doubter, you acknowledge some intellectual deficiencies in yourself; you doubt yourself, but you won't be gullible. You do have questions about its reality, proportion, and fairness, but you also see a need for hell, and are intellectually conflicted. Your questions on why hell may exist may overlap mine.

If hell were not true, you see its need for *those who deserve it*. There are some very evil people in the world. As I prepare this talk, a massacre of 13 men has just happened. A woman-hater recently opened fire at a gymnasium, wanting to find out what it was like after death, and killed a bunch of people. Every legal system would consign him to death, unless keeping him alive would make him suffer more in punishment. I was recently in Eastern Africa and 500,000 lives had been taken by a dictatorial regime. And before that in a near-by Rwanda, where nearly a million lives died in genocide. Hell is especially necessary for those in the name of their great and historic religions (which religion does not teach morality?) committed great horror: crusades and terrorism, inquisitions and improvised explosive devices, in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, North America, and Latin America. Let's face it, the primeval, primordial, primary human need and cry for justice, demands hell.

And yet, while I am extremely angry and disappointed in the human race, from my present understanding of hell, I wouldn't wish hell on anyone, and as the saying goes, "not even on our worst enemies." I am coming to you with sadness, warning and rescue strategies.

If hell were not true, you see it as necessary for a few who *want* to go hell. You may not be surprised to find out, that there are some who are so antagonistic toward God, that they want to go to hell. Actually, they are so antagonistic toward God because of hell that they *want* to go to hell in spite of being ignorant about its hellishness. I know of one atheist, who calls God a cosmic rapist who consigns billions of people to hell, worse than a Stalin or Hitler, and he therefore wants to go to hell away from God. That's a bad decision, especially because people like them are also welcome to reverse their

destination. If they change their orientation, they could change their destination. Here's a corollary: if a person wants to go to hell, in spite of all he presently knows, God gives him the privilege of choosing against him...and permanently facing the consequences of it. However if a person wants to go to heaven, in spite of all he presently does not know, God gives him the privilege of choosing his eternal future and permanently experiencing those consequences.

If hell were not true, you see still some necessity to isolate and contain evil in some way. Evil can break out anywhere, in the most educated and enlightened environments as we all know: scientists who deceive their friends, religious leaders who defraud others, or business people who are involved in scams. It's best to isolate evil in hell, and contain it, so all the evil in the world will become all the evil in hell. Hell is not so much a matter of evil, but of justice.

Evil must be isolated and contained, and all hell will break loose in hell all the time. So if hell were not true, it would still be necessary for those who deserve it, those who want to go there, and those who must be contained in it. That's why you are not a skeptic unwilling to believe regardless of hell's probability; but a doubter...willing to believe on the basis of hell's possibility.

A man told his friend, "My wife converted me from a skeptic to a believer." His friend asked, "How did she manage that?" The man replied, "I never believed in hell, 'till I married her." Let's address the believer in hell.

The Believer: A critical and thoughtful believer, is not a "gullible" person, who believes any and every version of hell. However, if a post-earth hell is a probable reality, one of only two eternal alternatives, he will humbly consider the wisest option; and even wisely consider humble options. He will take the best available course, make the most appropriate decision, given present information and circumstance. I would like to fall into this third category as I make this presentation to you.

There are those outside these three major audiences that make up the "critical mind" continuum. For practical, spiritual, or psychological reasons, they do not entertain questions about hell. For example,

The ignorant: They don't know about hell—if you are one of those, you won't be able to use that excuse anymore about yourself, after reading, hearing, or viewing this talk. The curse of ignorance is to be lifted with knowledge, though you may use the fact that most other people don't know about hell to turn yourself into a critical skeptic.

Medical doctors some times couch this “curse of ignorance” in prestige jargon. Some one described doctors as “people who prescribe medicines of which they know little, to cure diseases of which know less, for human beings of whom they know nothing.” The sophisticated declaration of ignorance is the diagnosis of a patient’s “idiopathic cardiomyopathy.” “Cardiomyopathy” simply means that something is wrong with the heart; and idiopathic cardiomyopathy—we have no idea what is wrong with the heart! However, we are going to treat you for it, and charge you for the treatment!

The fact of the matter is we don’t know about hell’s existence, and shouldn’t use ignorance as an excuse.

The fearful: Those who are in fear and denial about hell. They don’t think there could be a hell at all, and they hold this point of view irrationally or emotionally. Some of them feel victimized that hell is inevitable.

Denial is a psychological, and potentially a pathological condition. There’s even a feeling of personal invincibility. If you deny it, and keep denying it loudly and forcefully, you may feel it won’t happen to you. If you redefine it, you think it won’t happen to you.

Denying hell is found in this exchange: “When a former U.S. President died, he knocked on the door of the after-life. The door-keeper answered and recognized the most powerful man on the earth. “What bad things did you do on earth?” The President thought a bit and answered, “Well, I smoked marijuana but you shouldn’t hold that against me because I didn’t inhale. I guess I had extra-marital sex but you couldn’t hold that against me because I didn’t really have ‘sexual relations.’ And I lied, but I didn’t commit perjury.”

The door-keeper of the after-life quickly replied, “OK, here’s the deal. We’ll send you someplace where it is very hot, but we won’t call it ‘Hell.’ You’ll be there for an indefinite period of time, but we won’t call it ‘eternity.’ And don’t ‘abandon all hope’ upon entering, just don’t hold your breath to be released waiting for hell to freeze over.”

Ignorant and fearful, and yes there is a third group, which may be comprises the majority of the human race:

The apathetic: They don’t care if there is a hell, and whether they are going there. They don’t care to find out more; they’d rather not think about what they intuitively know. You’ve heard the old distinction between ignorance and apathy: “I don’t know; and I don’t care.”

I heard that business in hell was slowing down. Hell's board of directors called an emergency meeting to reach as many as possible, and prevent as many as possible from going to heaven.

Demon 1 said, "I'll go back to earth and convince that there's no heaven."

"That won't do," said Satan, "we've tried it before and it doesn't work. People have heaven on their minds."

"I'll convince them that there is no hell" said a second demon.

"That won't do," said Satan, "No that won't work. People have hell on their minds."

A veteran in the back of the room got up and said, "If you let me go back to earth, I can fill this place. I'll just convince them that there is no hurry. I will make them apathetic."

That decision was duly motioned, seconded and unanimously affirmed in hell.

In this treatment, I am only addressing those on the "critical mind" continuum, not those caught in the psychological spectrum. A critical mind is not the same as a "critical spirit," and everyone has to watch out for the latter as immature and infantile. I will look at these critical mind issues by looking at hell in parallel way, called the "certainty of knowledge continuum." This "certainty of knowledge continuum" first looks at hell as a plausible reality.

HELL AS A PLAUSIBILITY

Hell as a *plausible* reality calls for critical thought.

What does hell as a plausible reality mean? It means that hell is an *extraordinary* concept, and not arrived at in the usual or ordinary ways of knowledge—especially scientific knowledge via repeated experiments in a controlled environment. And so the existence of hell is suspected, as specious and spurious, false and erroneous, untrue and unsound. It might be true, but it could be deceptively false.

Here we enter the field of epistemology. How may we know anything at all? And how may we know that we know? And how may we know what we know as true or false? Especially in matters as *extraordinary* as hell.

One author defines, "critical thinking as the practice of thinking things through, in which one carefully *describes* something (an event, a book, a movie, a person, etc) and *evaluates* it according to some relevant criterion, considering significant alternatives."

Critical thinkers (i.e., those with critical minds rather than critical spirits) will point to hell as a beginning point in societies and cultures that people unconsciously take for granted, and never question, because their beliefs make hell plausible, not because hell exists. Because these plausibility structures (meaning, "religions") give power to the belief in hell, hell exists, but cannot be critically evaluated.

Those are good sets of comments, and need to be taken seriously. We all know people want to believe something to be true, and hence hold it to be true and then supposedly it becomes true. For example, the Gem of Tanzania was once thought to be most valuable jewel of its kind in the world. It also "once famously appeared as the principal asset on the balance sheet of a bankrupt construction company, [and now] has been revealed to be little more than an expensive paperweight. The 2.1kg (4.6lb) rock is now believed to be a large lump of *anyolite*, a low-grade form of ruby, with a value of just £100." The only thing which gave it value was people's belief that it was valuable. When finally examined, the gem simply a hallowed bit of stone with value because of its history of belief, not because it was valuable in itself.

So is hell true because people believe it to be true?

We appreciate the caution, but don't write off the religions yet. *All*, not few, of the major religions of the world have concepts of the post-death fate of the wicked--retributive judgment. What if hell is not the result of religious beliefs; what if religions instead were the result of the prior plausibility of hell? That there was a universal underlying need for hell, like we considered earlier, in justice, to give those who want to go there, and the need to contain evil and hell forever?

This universal feature is especially interesting because major religions who don't agree with each other on almost every *other* issue, and in fact contradict each other and often consider each other false, agree on the existence of hell. *All* major religions have their own concepts of hell. Even if they disagree about what hell is like (one thinks it is hot forever, and another cold at times), and how long it extends (eternally or temporarily), and its purpose (fearful deterrent to personally punitive) they all do agree on the reality of hell!

To say that hell has a zero-chance of existence is actually against human physiological, psychological, and intellectual needs. Other basic human needs are met by real solutions—there is some thing indefinable but really sensed as love, because humans have the “need” for love. There is something really nourishing as food and water, because humans have a need for food and water. Now, this internal, visceral need for eternal justice, especially for the wicked, may just present its *plausible* reality. So while we are not looking for mathematical certainty about hell, a gut-level sense for the need for a punitive hell tips the argument towards the plausibility of hell. This kind of argument doesn't *require* belief--don't make gut-level instinct the determining criterion, it does make hell plausible, even reasonable, especially, if other relevant factors make it credible.

The *plausibility* of the concept of hell calls for critical thinking—including, self-critical thinking. Actually your *unbelief* in the plausibility of hell may be unjustified and invalid because of your own prior plausibility structure.

Think with me about the skeptic's appeal to scientific ignorance about hell. Appeal to “ignorance”—is a logical fallacy which says: “something is true because its opposite has not been proven;” or “something is true because there is no evidence against it.” The non-existence of hell becomes true because it's opposite heaven, has not been proven! Or, since there is no evidence against unbelief in hell, hell doesn't exist. May I suggest that the best that the skeptic can do is to plead ignorance, and consider hell's possibility, more than just it's plausibility, when it comes to the extraordinary concept of hell?

If the *plausibility* of the concept of hell calls for critical thinking—including, self-critical thinking, it sets us up for *possibility* of the existence of hell on the continuum of the critical mind.

Two friends from the same village went to school and high school together. One returned to his father's farm; the other went on to the highest studies in philosophy and turned atheist. He thought he went from childish ignorance to educated uncertainty:

When they met after many years, the prideful philosopher wanted to impress his childhood farmer friend.

“Have you seen hell?” asked the atheist.

“No” said the farmer.

“Have you ever smelled hell?” asked the atheist again.

"No," said the farmer.

"Well, then," said the atheist with pride written all over his face. "Then how can you be so sure there is a hell?"

The farmer replied with his own set of questions to the atheist, "Professor, have you ever seen your brains?"

"No," said the atheist.

"And have you ever smelled your brains?"

"No," said the atheist.

"Then how can you be so sure you have any brains?"

HELL AS A POSSIBILITY

Hell as a *possible* reality calls for justified belief.

Let's continue on the matter of hell's existence with a short dialogue between philosophers and theologians. A theologian said to the philosopher: "You are a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there! And the philosopher replied, "and you find the black cat is not there."

Philosophers will tell us that one can't generally argue from plausibility to possibility; concept to existence. Theologians reply that it can be done only in the existence-as-necessary-to-concept cases. For example, philosophers say, just because all humans have a concept of a perfect being, doesn't mean that he exists. And theologians reply, but if he doesn't exist, he isn't a perfect being, since existence is necessary to perfection.

Similarly you may want to ask yourself why no greater possible suffering than eternal hell can be conceptualized by human beings, and if that this extraordinary situation in some way make possible, even necessitates hell's existence. Since we have so many who do deserve hell, and a few want hell, and all wish evil be restrained and contained forever.

In the case of the possibility of hell, we don't have to be in total fear and denial, for logical, theological, or psychological reasons. We actually have information about hell that must be evaluated for justified belief and actionable knowledge about hell.

What sources of information do you use?

A large part of what you know comes from information where you are not the credible source. But you can be the wise evaluator of such information. I want you to follow me very carefully for the next few pages.

In epistemology, this way of knowing arises from an *appeal to credible authority*. For example, if you have not heard of Gangtok, Sikkim, remote and beautiful, nearly on top of the world, you will have to take it on other's "revelation" that there is such a place. Those who were born or have been there and taken pictures, or meeting people from there, even on a search engine or social networking site confirms to you that the place exists. In fact, a great number of tourists go there as a destination site, based on *other* people's testimonials. Then Gangtok, Sikkim goes from a plausible reality to a possible reality on the basis of wise appeal to credible authority.

Very simply, one's appeal to authority is false if it relies on inappropriate authority. If an information source doesn't possess the expertise and/or the character that the piece of information demands, you shouldn't make him a reliable or credible source on the subject. Check "urban legends" websites for tall tales and grand stories without credible sources perpetuated as general knowledge!

We also find this false use of authority in television commercials and advertisements where celebrities endorse products from cars to computers even though they don't possess any expertise on the product. Indeed, their lack of expertise on the product, except possibly liking it, contributes to their lack of integrity. An adoring public buys products of which the celebrity knows nothing, except that they like it. You shouldn't be that gullible and credulous. If the source appealed to as authority is untruthful or unproven as an authority, he should be considered irrelevant as an authority on the subject.

However, if a person is knowledgeable and truthful, he can be a reliable and credible source of information to a much greater extent about the issues in question.

Is there a credible source of information on hell?

So, let's look at the information we have on hell from one of the greatest men in history; and then consider whether he should be considered appropriate authority on the subject. You may have heard of Jesus, whom some people worship as their God.

Whether Jesus is God or not, he is one of the great men of history. He claims to have expert knowledge about hell and then proves that he is a credible source with trustworthy character—even by rising from the dead.

Features of Hell: Jesus reveals two features about hell

1. Hell is *permanent*. That is forever. It never stops existing. Jesus says hell is “eternal,” which means unceasing and forever.
2. Hell is *painful*. I want you to think of horror-movies, or horrific sights that you have seen, scenes which make you afraid or vomit; those which evoke deep sympathy or make you want to immediately act toward a suffering human being. Take that movie and intensify the horror a million times; complicate its fear a billion times; extend it a trillion times into forever and forever. Then we may be starting to understand the concept of a painful eternity. Hell is filled with unmitigated and unstoppable suffering.

Images of Hell: This same Jesus, a credible and reliable source of information on hell, used multiple set of images to describe hell as eternal death.

- a. Dust-bin and wastebasket of the universe. Hell is like the garbage dump, the trash container—of the universe. Maggots and creeping things occupy the ruin and the rubble. On occasion, I help my wife by taking out the garbage in our house. I never have to check to see if anything valuable has been placed in there. Only what is worthless waste and useless junk—the irreparable, the unredeemable, the unsellable on eBay auction sites, is placed in those large plastic bags and garbage bins.
- b. Darkness and night: People in hell are said to be banished to outer darkness. You’ve been to weddings. Inside the banquet hall there is joy and light and festivity; outside there is night. Jesus presents hell as joyless, hopeless, endless night. Have you ever been truly lost in the dark in an unfamiliar place? Just your imagination can drive you crazy—a noise here, a scratch there, an unobserved movement nearby. No lights on your phone or key ring to read your maps. Your GPS doesn’t light up; your phone goes dark, along with the street lights.
- c. Detention, meaning life imprisonment. Hell is eternal life imprisonment, without parole; with no way to escape, not even death. Jesus says there’s an unbridgeable gulf fixed, from there to the opposite destination. I went to see a young friend in prison once. His 30-day incarceration was long, but the possibility of release kept his hopes alive as he counted each day. What if he didn’t have the hope of release?

d. Distress of the harshest imaginable kind: Jesus uses “unquenchable fire” in his descriptions. You know there’s nothing more painful than fire. Go to a hospital burn unit where people are burned or undergoing burn treatment, and you can hear deep moaning and terrible groaning. Jesus warned us of real fire, eternal fire. He did not explain the physical or chemical content of the fire. We will have bodies, but we won’t die. He repeated an unusual phrase about eternal hell, “there the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched,”—and “placed internal pain (the worm) and external pain (unquenchable fire) side by side.”

e. Devastation: The phrase “weeping and grinding of teeth” is used several times by Jesus of those who find themselves in hell. There is neither love nor laughter, not kissing, not even whistling.

“Weeping” is terrible sorrow, regret, deepest sense of loss. Have you ever lost people or property? You look and pray for their recovery and it just never happens. In hell you never get over grief. It only intensifies daily—the loss of loved ones, the possessions for which you worked for, the hobbies you enjoyed, and memories of them. Sad! Maddeningly sad.

There is the loss of what God thought about you. He presently thinks about you as valuable, salvageable, redeemable. Consequently, you will have to assert and fend for yourself, against others who will assert and fend for themselves. Everyone will be as free and powerful as everyone else...in the deadlock of freedom. One author asks, “Who wants freedom the most? Those who are locked in prison.” Have you ever seen or heard of a prison fight? Every right is a conflict and there will be total selfish anarchy.

Here’s a simulation of hell’s anarchy. Let’s suppose in the middle of hell there was a large pot of stew, i.e., if there were food in hell. The stew smells delicious. All around this pot are people who are starving and in desperation. They all hold spoons in their hands. These spoons have unusually long handles which reach all the way into the pot. Because the spoon handles are longer than their arms, they are unable to return full spoons of delicious stew to their own mouths while famished. Their suffering is terrible and continuous. But they never think, that while they cannot feed themselves, that they could easily feed each other. Hell is selfish, by definition.

“Grinding or gnashing of teeth”—this could simply mean gritting your teeth in the face of pain and danger. It’s difficult to laugh while gnashing teeth. Just imagine living without laughter. I can imagine living without pain; but living without laughter? That itself will keep me from wanting to go to hell, and to try

to not go there at all costs. No outlet for all the intrinsically and authentically human joys: creativity, aesthetics, music, education, loving sex, meaning, purpose, or art—some of the very things that make humans, human. Hell will rob you of red-blooded, full-throttle life.

“Grinding” of teeth could also mean to gnarl, to growl, to snarl...at each other, and at God himself in ongoing rebellion. Hell is precisely what we ask for—to quote a poet from the past—“Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven” (John Milton). You will be the king in hell with others who all think they are the kings of hell. A world-class billionaire philanthropist said not long ago, “Who wants to go to heaven where everything will be boring. I want to go to hell, where I can change some things for the better.” He neither understands heaven or hell. He relies on himself as his own authority, himself as expert and trustworthy on matters the angels dare not speak.

Growing up in India, I would watch young bamboo basket weavers behind our home would burn all the scrap bamboo in the open space by the side of our house. It would send a trail of graying smoke into the wintry sky and a trail of foul smell into our home. We would play cricket barefoot, and the ball would get lost into the scrap heap. We’d go looking for those expensive tennis or cricket balls gingerly treading on the smoldering bamboo scraps. When occasionally burned, we would yell, and run to the water faucet and open the taps. In hell there will be burning, but not watering.

Hell is a place of refuse, not refuge.

These are images of suffering, separation, sadness, distress, and destruction...only they go forever and ever. It is a place of terrible torment. I don’t want to try to make all of this too dramatic...because I couldn’t do justice, any more than I can describe the opposite destination, heaven. You are saying, “All of this doesn’t scare me...I have seen worse movies than that.” Except movies are exactly that...you are not in the movie.

But take movies...you have a movie-like brain—though you haven’t seen or smelled your brains. Neurologists (such as Dr. Wilbur Penfield, director of the Montreal Neurological Institute) say that your brain is such a fantastic instrument...that it contains a permanent record of your past that is like a single, continuous movie strip of your whole waking life, from childhood on. You can again live those scenes from the past, one at a time, if a surgeon applies a gentle electrical current to a certain point on the temporal cortex of your brain. Your brain will play your movie. Whenever judgment comes all that needs to be done is to hit the play button and the movie of your life will start, including options you could have taken, destiny that could be reversed, thoughts and

actions committed and omitted. Your own movie will scare you, and more than the worst horror movies you've seen, because it will evoke judgment.

More importantly, Jesus, through his graphic descriptions, is to putting up a sign about the dangers of hell in plain language, to alert and caution you. I can only stumble through these matters right now. Really our present experiential categories are not adequate to comprehend the quality of each of his descriptions of hell. I don't think anyone can be scared into heaven.

Most importantly, about Jesus' statements on hell: He spoke of all this in love and care for you, and in a rather matter-of-fact manner. And I hope you can read that same spirit in my spirit toward you.

Now there are other descriptions of hell in God's Word that I have left out. For example, hell is a bottomless abyss. We have a picture of hell as voracious, greedy, and ravenous. This bottomless pit imagery speaks to our primal fear of falling. Have you ever dreamed of falling, falling, falling without anything to hold you up? What about permanently?

At this point of my presentation, my only question here is, if all this is a possibility, coming from the lips of the most loving person who ever lived, Jesus. Perhaps, he is wrong. How could we view him as an expert on the subject and personally trustworthy?

It's just that Jesus claims expert knowledge on hell. He describes its nature, quality, composition, constituencies, timing, entrance, and his own authoritative role in who will go to hell.

He is also a trustworthy source. His outlandish knowledge on hell should be trusted, or at least get your attention.

1. Jesus says he comes from God and that all his words and deeds only reflect what God wants him to say. God does know about hell. He goes one step further and notes that judgment is in his own hands now. That he personally judges all people at the end of time as to whether they end up in eternal loss. That claim should receive our attention.

2. Jesus doesn't talk about hell with relish like some priests, preachers, and movie producers do. He doesn't want to consign human beings there, or want anyone to perish. In fact, he weeps over this possibility; and sends his followers all over the world to give the message of salvation to all people without discrimination, regardless of background, culture, religion, or language. That should receive some attention.

3. Jesus speaks about the origins and purpose of hell in first-person declarations. That hell was created to house the devil and his angels. That he himself saw the prime occupants of hell being judged and thrown out of heaven. That insider information should receive our attention.

4. And then as the ultimate demonstration of trustworthiness, Jesus dies for the sake of his teachings. He goes through his hell for humanity's sake so we won't have to experience it. Good-minded and stouthearted people are usually willing to die for what they believe to be true, though it may be false, but they will not willingly die for something they know to be false. He gave his life to rescue us from the permanent and painful eternal prospect. That should receive our attention.

5. And finally, God shows his approval of Jesus' message to the humanity as the Savior of all people, by raising him from the dead. Why would Jesus be raised from the dead—the only historically verifiable self-resurrection in history—if he was a lie and not trustworthy? That should receive our attention.

So Jesus is not only an expert in knowledgeable, he is also a trustworthy source on hell. In fact, as I take a look at humanity, he is the ONLY knowledgeable and trustworthy source, who is the only source who gives hope at the end. All others simply hope to give hope at the end. I have entrusted my whole life, now and into the future with him. Don't dismiss his knowledge of hell just because he doesn't look like the rescuer you think he should look like.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told the story about a circus that caught fire. The flames from the circus fire speedily spread to the fields surrounding the circus grounds and began to burn toward the village below. The circus master, convinced that the village would be destroyed and the people killed unless they were warned, asked if there was anybody who could go the village and warn the people. The clown, dressed in full costume, jumped on a bicycle and sped down the hill to the village below.

"Run for your lives! Run for your lives! A fire is coming and the village is going to burn!" he shouted as he rode up and down the streets of the village. "The village is going to burn! Run for your lives!"

Curious villagers came out of their houses and shops and stood along the sidewalks. They shouted back to the clown, laughing and applauding his performance. The more desperately the clown shouted, the more the villages cheered.

The village burned down and the loss of life was great because no one took the clown seriously. After all, he was just a clown.

You may not take Jesus' version of hell seriously, for after all he doesn't seem to be an authoritative and trustworthy announcer...he looks like an ordinary mortal, not like God. If he were God, he would have access to the right information, And yet, you gently nod, even cheer him on, while your life is at stake. It's not the wisest and best response.

From the plausibility of hell that calls for critical thought; to the possibility of hell which calls for careful belief; let's look at hell as a probable reality.

HELL AS A PROBABLE REALITY

Hell as a *probable* reality calls for your personal response.

I want to become personal with you. Freeze your life situation right now—leave things outside, outside; and behind, behind. Examine your life, your actions, your values, your beliefs, and your future. Look at your heart, listen to your mind. Can you detect that God has been moving toward you through nature, history, conscience?

I can't change your mind and heart, but I wanted to improve your decision making process and present the big picture. Because eternity is forever, only longer.

Three major fires across the world within one year of preparing this talk provide parallels for my final point. Hell as a probable reality calls for a personal response.

It was war zone in Southern California in the United States. Mandatory evacuation orders covered 10,000 homes. People were fleeing everything preciously accumulated over the years. However, some in danger were not willing to accept the danger. Others were critically injured because "they did not listen and follow the evacuation orders." That was wrong personal response.

In late July 2009 the northern edges of Athens, Greece (and all nearby historical sites and archeological ruins) became susceptible to encroaching fire. Under the ominous wrath of the forest fires, Greek coastal resorts had to be evacuated. Local firefighters had to enlist Italian and French help to douse the flames. As he was fleeing, a BBC reporter noted, "It is very depressing. This

area, to the northeast of Athens, used to be like Alpine scenery and now looks like a moonscape." Firefighters took personal responsibility.

Nearly 200 people died on Black Saturday (February 7, 2009) in the state of Victoria, Australia. Horrendous stories of people having to choose between staying in cars and getting out to flee as the bushfires consumed both cars and people were the *only* topic of conversation. Our Melbourne host showed me an intrusive emergency text message of the previous day: a warning to five million people to prevent another Black Saturday. And yet some at risk thought the authorities were crying wolf! I saw signs all around town asked, "Are you bushfire ready? Plan, prepare, practice." They wanted the people to assume that the fires would affect them.

I am borrowing the theory of probability from some "basic mathematics symbolization." In mathematics an unlikely occurrence of an event is closer to a zero, and a likely event is closer to a one. In probability theory, they "identify *all* different outcomes that could occur and then establish its likelihood." In life after death matters, there are only two outcomes, so the probability of one of the two options, is to put it mildly, in reserved understatement, very high.

An intoxicated gentleman asked a pedestrian, "I shay, which ish the other shide of the street?"

"Why, over there," was the answer.

"Shtrange. I was jus' over the there an' a gentlemen shaid it wash over here."

Hell is only one of two options, not of multiple options, so the chances are higher we get there, and we *must* decide.

Hell then does not need to be proven by an appeal to emotion—one of the reasons, I have not spent too much time going through the horrid verbal and artsy descriptions of hell over history. You can look them up on the internet yourself.

What is an appeal to emotion? It too is a "thinking fallacy," where a case is made by appeal to emotion. That is your emotional response to hell's quality does not determine whether it exists. And what it contains, etc. Hell might be true, real and certain regardless of your emotional response to it.

Instead, for you to be wise, you need to look at hell's probability—closer to one than a zero. You need to look at the what and why of hell; who the hell

will be there; when the hell will hell burn? How long the hell will hell exist? And then assess risk, make a decision, change direction, and reach your new destination. You don't want to accept the reality of hell on the basis of fear, guilt, even hostility against God? Then just consider the alternatives, and make a wise and informed choice. Hell is a highly probable reality that calls for personal response in both wisdom and trust.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF WISDOM

First, the perspective of wisdom—in the sense of risk-assessment, risk management. You do risk-analysis all the time. For example, you may wonder, "Should I leave the house when it is raining outside?" "Should I get on a plane? Is the aircraft and airline reliable?" "Should I drive when the drivers are likely intoxicated?" We assess risk continuously, and intuitively, as well as by other people's testimony and experience.

Here's the challenge: "Just because the speaker doesn't prove there is a hell doesn't mean there isn't," and, "just because the author proves there is no hell, doesn't mean there isn't a hell." The existence and non-existence of hell doesn't depend on my ability to prove anything. All people on the earth are on this life side of a potentially eternal decision.

However, if you are wise, you are being called to a more *formal* risk-analysis, even decision analysis of the conditions of your real-world life, and your potential-eternal future. "But *formal risk analysis* and risk management can help you to assess these risks and decide what actions to take to minimize (danger and) disruptions to your plans." It is no longer enough to be casual and ad hoc about this matter. You won't run your business like that. If you are wise person, you will be continuously aware of threats and dangers.

One way to calculate risk is by the following value: *risk = probability of the event times the cost of the event*. Make your best estimate of the probability of the event occurring, and to multiply this by the amount it will cost you to set things right if it happens. This gives you a value for the risk.

Now we all know that death is not a probability, it is a certainty—whether young or old. A month ago, I read about a 20 year-old Brazilian beauty queen Marian Bridi was living the dream of many a young Brazilian woman, that promised the lifting of her family out of poverty—father a taxi driver. She became a finalist in Brazilian stage of the Miss World pageant, becoming a super-model. Then she contracted a seemingly ordinary urinary tract infection. The bacteria spread quickly and inexorable through her body, proving to be extremely drug resistant. In a desperate bid to save her life, doctors amputated

her feet, and then a little later amputated her hands. They pumped medicine into her and hoped for the best. In one month she was dead...*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, a drug resistant infection relatively rare—dead at 20.

Risk-assessment, by potential threats, whether human, or operational or financial, is a good exercise when the future is unknown. The key is for you not to think of risk in the abstract! We all know at least one known certain future—we are going to die. Air France flight 447 left Sao Paulo for Paris and suddenly went missing in mid-2009. All passengers and crew died. An Italian woman, Johanna Ganthaler, arrived late for the fatal flight. So she boarded a later flight, and avoided being a victim of the horrible crash. Grateful for the escape, she and her husband rented a car in Munich, Germany and decided to drive home to Italy. In Austria, their car ended up in the opposite lane and had a head-on collision with a truck. The woman died at the hospital. Death is certain. If you'd like to read more about the certainty of death watch my channel on youtube.com.

The only issue here is the post-death probability of hell's reality. And the cost of such a scenario is horrific. With Jesus having made a case for Himself as trustworthy source (God didn't need to raise him when he died if he was false) with expert information, you would be wisest to accept his provision of salvation. We are highly vulnerable to the risk-of-hell, especially, since there is no way out, once you get there. Once hell is entered, it is permanent and painful. The likelihood of this threat being realized in your life is high, and its impact on your life is extreme. I think you should be wise.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRUST

Business educators tell us that in contingency planning, risk may be managed in at least two ways: 1) by using existing assets; 2) by investing in new resources

- *By using existing assets:* In the case of this-life earth, you do possess some moral assets—you do good, feed the hungry, and go to church, temple and mosque. You don't beat your wife or steal from your boss.

But in the case of next-life eternity, you don't have any assets. In fact your existing assets, especially your moral behavior, gets you into further trouble. That's the sadness of it all. You and I don't have to do anything to get to hell. We are already going there. We are already intensifying the speed of descent every day by doing good and bad things on the way to others who are doing good and bad things on their way to hell. After we get to hell, there will be no existing assets, because there will be no

further threats or opportunities in hell. It would be an ongoing and continuous reality.

Your only hope is:

- *By investing in new resources:* Your risk analysis should give you the basis for deciding whether to bring in new resources to counter the risk. Here you will find someone else to carry your risk. This new resource strategy is particularly important where the risk is so great as to threaten your solvency.

Where is your new resource so that you do not take excessive risk?

Conclusion:

That's what the Lord Jesus offers. Today you can have Jesus be your new resource, to carry your risk, and be certain about the future. No other way of salvation from hell gives you this certainty:

Listen to what the Lord Jesus said about himself, selflessly and seriously for our sake, providing an early warning system:

Indeed, God did not send the Son [Jesus] into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God (The Bible—John 3:17-18).

Notice these assertions drawn from Jesus' words above:

1. God didn't send His Son (Jesus) into the world to condemn the world. Yes, there's a hell, and it exists. And we are part of the world that he did not come to condemn. He didn't come to damn us to hell.

2. God sent His Son (Jesus) in order that the world might be saved. You and I can be saved from condemnation, from damnation. Jesus is God's Savior, Rescuer, and Liberator of the human race.

3. Those who believe in him are not condemned. You don't want to go to hell? Believe in him—that he is the expert on hell. Further, he is trustworthy to save you. Call on him to save you. You believe in him and you are not condemned.

4. But those who do not believe are condemned already. If we don't believe in Him, we are already condemned. We don't have to do any thing to get to hell. We are already headed there. My title is a mis-titled, but it is not misleading. How to get to hell? Just keep on as you are. You are heading there even without trying. You are condemned already. A man picked up a book entitled, "How to Go to Hell," and the pages were blank. Most people believe it is hard to get to hell and easy to get to heaven. It's actually not at all hard to get into hell.

5. Why? Because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. Two comments here:

a. Notice this is a specific and unique person—the Only Son of God. He is God's Only Son. God does not bear biological sons like you and I bear sons. Jesus is not God's spiritual son, like we can be the sons of God. God's only Son, is one of a kind son, different from us. God's only Son is God's Only Savior.

b. Notice that you need to believe in His name—His name is Jesus...or in many languages, Yesu, Jesu, Hesus, Isa, Yeshua, Jesus. You have to believe in his name.

What does it mean to believe in him? It's basically this: You believe in him as your trustworthy Savior. You don't have to do any thing to get to hell; but you have to believe in Him if you want to reverse your destiny. Not only believe *that* he can save you from hell, but believe *in* him to save you from hell. You can believe *that* he has the expertise; but you have to believe *in* him as trustworthy. You don't have to do any thing to get to hell; but you have to believe someone, God's Son, to reverse your destination.

That is, you admit you are dying and descending into hell and deserve to get there because all have offended a perfect God. Your wrongs, your failures, your sins—have all offended God, and that you don't want to continue in them for eternity.

That is, you are willing to trust the One who went through hell for you, so you can be rescued from hell forever. He took your place for your offenses; he took your offenses; he paid for your sin; he risked his life for you and died; and invites you to trust your life with him as your Only Savior. You don't have to do anything to get to hell; all you have to do is to trust this One. Jesus is God's Only Savior, and man's only Savior. You can decide if he will be your Only Savior

For that decision reverses your destiny, changes your destination, away from hell, and puts you in a new direction to the opposite side of eternity. Heaven too could be plausible, possible, and probable, but now with the Only Son of God rescuing you, heaven becomes certain.

I do not write or speak on this subject with glee, hate, or superiority, and I hope you have been able to read that. Actually, I feel accountable for you and thus this early warning announcement about the way to eternal safety. I have had to lose in order to bring you this message, but I care for you enough to come to you. I don't come with this message to receive any thing from you or any body else. I would rather sit in a climate-controlled, library environment writing and thinking and listening to brilliant music on noise-cancellation headphones. But Jesus lost His life to bring you salvation, and I thought I'd lose a few hours and a little bit of precious resources to bring you his message. God raised Jesus from the dead, so He could guarantee us rescue, safety, and deliverance.

You get to make a decision right now. You can ask God to reverse the course of your life, away from your actual, and inevitable decline into eternal hell. All you have to do is to trust the Only Son of God, Jesus as your Savior from all your sins.

Or you can say to God, "I want God to leave me alone." That, my friend, God is willing to do when you get to hell, *but not until then*. My coming to you is part of his not leaving you alone. Jesus said a couple of sentences later into his talk about himself as the Son. "The Father loves the Son and has placed all things (especially the coming judgment) in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath" (The Bible—John 3:35-36).

Jesus is God's Only Savior and humanity's only Savior. The only question is whether you will trust him, embrace him, receive him as *Your Only Savior*. He has removed hell's risk factor from your future.

I close with an adaptation of a fine story for our purposes.

A girl whose rich father had died, lived with her well-to-do mother in an upstairs room. One night a fire broke out in the house, and her mother perished in the fire. Her private nurse came in rushing to save her. Out of loyalty to the family, she did her best, but found the door locked. She desperately banged on the door as hard as she could. It was too dangerous for her to enter. Sadly she perished. Next came her private teacher. By the time she got there to rescue the child, it was too late. The doors were blocked by the flames, and the teacher

died too. The fire continued to spread through the mansion, and the girl's upstairs room was soon surrounded by flames.

The neighbors called the fire department, but knew they that the firefighters would arrive too late to save the little girl trapped upstairs. They could hear her cries in the upstairs bedroom, but there was nothing that any one could do.

Suddenly a man appeared with a tall ladder, raised it against the side of the house, climbed the ladder, broke a window and disappeared into the house. He took some time to find the girl, but the young lady in her ignorance and fear of strangers cried out, "No, my mother will come; my nurse will come; my teacher will come for me. I can't go with a stranger. Someone I know will come for me." And the man yelled, trust me—I've climbed a high ladder, risked my very life, and have gotten burned by the raging fire to save you. Or else you too will perish."

Soon he reappeared at the window with the little girl in his arms. Since the fire was about to consume the house, and his ladder, he jumped from the upper floor just as an ambulance arrived. His face reflected his pain as he limped while delivering the little girl to the paramedics who rushed her to the hospital. The little girl survived, but the man who saved her disappeared into the crowd.

A few months later, the little girl went before a judge who had the responsibility of placing her into a foster home. She had no living relatives. So it was up to the courts to find her a proper home to care for her future.

The judge decided to interview several prospective people who were willing to take her in. After interviewing them all, he would make his decision. The little girl was present in the courtroom during these lengthy proceedings.

The first person requesting custody of the child was her mother's friend, also a mother with compassion for kids. She said she knew her mother, and had much experience with little girls. She offered the little girl a wholesome environment, where she would learn the principles of hard work and the simple life.

The second person was a nurse, a friend of the girl's private nurse who died. Having been alone all her life, she needed companionship but could help this young lady in need. She revealed her bank accounts and everyone was amazed how much she had accumulated.

"I can give this child anything she needs or wants. I will provide her with the finest of clothes and send her to the best of schools. If she lives with me, she will have whatever her heart desires. Further, I have connections to fine medical personnel who could guarantee good health."

Then, came a school teacher, a friend of the private teacher. She too had known about the young lady. She pointed out to the judge that the child would need a good education, and as a teacher, she could make sure that she learned a great deal. She knew how to teach children, and she knew how to take care of a girl like this one.

Several other people were interviewed and each of whom explained why it would be to the little girl's advantage to live with them.

"Does any else have anything to say before I make my decision?" asked the judge.

Just then a man came forward from the back of the court room. He walked very slowly with a pronounced limp. When he got to the front of the room, he stood directly facing the little girl and held out his arms. The crowd gasped. His hands and his arms were terribly burned and scarred.

"This is the man who saved me!" cried the little girl. I have been looking for you all these months. With a leap, she threw her arms around the man's neck holding on for dear life, just as she had on the day of the fire. She buried her face in his shoulder and sobbed for a few moments. Then she looked up and smiled with grin that lit up the court room.

"I think I've just made my decision," said the judge. And the court was adjourned.

You see my friend, when it comes to the reality of hell, we need more than our mothers, teachers, nurses. They all have their good roles and helpful functions to fulfill. Your beloved *nation* like a parent-- your motherland or fatherland—gave birth to you; your sophisticated and historic *culture* is your nurse—brought you up; your moral *religion* has been your teacher, giving you fine teaching and morality. Our nations, cultures and religions, all have their advantages and benefits, but they will not keep us from hell or rescue us from hell. What you and I need is a Savior—and that my friend, is what God offers you in his Only Son, Jesus.

When it comes to the Savior the only decision is trust. If you question the rescuer, if you reject the rescuer, if you fight the rescuer, as not-being

trustworthy, then it would be too late. The Lord Jesus claims to be the trustworthy rescuer, who not only gave authoritative information about hell, but actually gave himself as Savior. If you reject him, your lostness continues, your vulnerability is not reduced. But if you believe on him, your decision is made, your destination is changed, and your direction is reversed. You don't have to do anything more to go to hell. You are already on the way. Instead, you can trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and you will not get there.

Since God is totally just, not one person will be in hell who should not be there. Even one person in hell is too many, and one too many persons in hell would be unjust. Of course, the same justice of God means that not one person will be in heaven who should not be there, and God has given the only way to get to heaven.

Many questions may still exist in your heart and mind. You can write to us about them. However, the truth is that you need to make a decision against hell by seeking rescue, calling for help, and embracing the help that has been sent—like I did. Reverse Your Destiny!