

# A Mission Church

## ***The decline in believers of Heaven and Hell*** **“NO WINGS and NO FLAMES”**

This almost sounds like a restaurant critic complaining about no Hot Wings at an eatery. But this title is really speaking about the many – *including Catholics and Christians* – who hold no credible belief in heaven or in hell. No angelic setting nor a giant burning pit fueled by an endless gas supply.

To address this properly, we need to make divisions among the varied beliefs. There are:

1. Believers of both heaven and hell.
2. Believers of heaven only.
3. Believers of neither heaven nor hell.
4. Believers of a reincarnation.

Scripture teaches us about the realities of heaven and hell. It is the belief of Christians and Catholics alike that truth is fundamental to the message of scripture. If that be the case, then the references concerning heaven and hell found in scripture must be true. Jesus refers to heaven and hell on numerous occasions. A few are: Mt 8:12; Mt 9:41-48; Lk 3:7. The most pronounced is that of the final judgment vividly described in Matthew, 25:31-43.

The Catholic Church has always maintained the realities of heaven and hell. With such a teaching and belief, you would think that all Catholics should be “safe” with this belief. Wrong! ***There are many Catholics who fall in with many other Christians of various denominational and non-denominational beliefs, practices, and teachings, that hold there is no hell.*** Their rationale is simple. God is love and is all-forgiving. Therefore, he would never condemn a person to hell.

### **HEAVEN**

Why is it that we point to the sky when asked to describe heaven? It’s nice to think that God is somewhere up in the clouds. Truth be told, ***Heaven is Where God is, and in communion with Mary, all the saints, and all who sought a loving oneness with God while on earth.***

God is everywhere. Heaven is where God, perfect love, is perfectly shared – where we become “like him for we shall see him as he is.” (1 Jn. 3:2) Heaven, in as simple of terms as possible, is when we are loved into oneness with God for all eternity because we have sought heaven here, now. It is here that our joy becomes complete as Jesus prayed (Jn 16:20-24), and we are perfected as Jesus encouraged (Mt 5:48).

### **HELL**

We don’t see the world “hell” scripture, unless we’re using a loose translation. Hades is the Greek word and Sheol is the Hebrew translation. Jesus refers to Sheol as Gehenna. In considering hell, forget the flames and everlasting heat of a blast furnace. The burning comes to a person at death, seeing God and realizing how separation from God during this life remains – with no

parole. It is the person who has separated himself from God, his love, from his very being. The truth of the scripture, and a person’s failure to believe and live scripture, is that which condemns him. ***God, who is perfect love, will give the person what the person desired – permanent separation from his perfect love.***

That person will burn (desire) for that love then, but will never attain it. Better we burn for the love of

God now, and maintain a living fire of love (St. John of the Cross) than to expect our God to change. That won’t happen. Hell exposes the primal desires of life and leaves the individual stranded with his after death. Then it will be realized that these desires have no value. Too Late! The choice was made here.

### **BELIEVERS OF HEAVEN AND HELL**

These folks will set their lives to see God as loving, merciful, and compassionate. They’ll see themselves as sinners, honestly acknowledging their sins continuously, as they seek a more perfect relationship with the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ. These lives are filled with the Holy Spirit directing the action, just as Jesus did. These, who have not turned from God’s compassion, mercy, and love, who have not tried to dictate God’s thinking, we believe, will find perfected love



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in eternal joy, peace, and happiness.

There's also the cult "religion" of Satanism, reversing what should be sought, and leading many to remove themselves from the love of God in favor of the many worldly attractions. In many cases they practice the rituals of a cult that is destructive. This is not Christian. Such a cult is not presented as truthful any more than the beliefs of the New Age Movement. For Satanists, the "prince of darkness" is worshipped. Satanist's sole purpose is to drag the souls of the just away from God and into eternal hell. They'll do just about anything to change your angelic hopes — even move into the house next door. Yes, there are people living in your community who practice such beliefs. Be on guard.

### **BELIEVERS OF HEAVEN ONLY**

Misguided souls that they are. *To deny hell is to deny the reason for the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.* To deny the existence of hell is to deny the freedom God has provided for us to live as we choose according to our desires. Unfortunately in this belief of no hell, God is no longer the One who directs the action, but the one who is now expected to submit to a person's wishes. These people believe free will controls God, rather than leading them to the True God.

This group of believers may be the most dangerous to true believers today. They go for everything possible and invite us to do the same — from holding material possessions, to living without a moral code of conduct lacking any respect for another. They create jealousy and envy, greed, sloth, lust, and avarice in the minds and hearts of others. God is minimized, if believed at all. (And we thought only atheists lacked a conviction of a true heaven and hell.)

### **BELIEVERS OF NEITHER HEAVEN NOR HELL**

These people see death as the end. "That's All Folks!" Enjoy it while you can. *Basically, they're saying, "God doesn't exist."* And since God doesn't exist, then heaven and hell can't exist either. But there's a problem with these people. There's an old adage that says:

*To deny the possible existence of something, a person must first acknowledge the possibility of its very existence."*

It become's the responsibility of the one denying to give proof for the denial. Therefore, to think that God does not exist, a person must allow the possibility that God does exist. With this, the denial of heaven and hell as certitudes goes right out the window.

We know many living in the belief of no heaven and no hell. They, too, are our neighbors. They may be

family members. In prescribing to a void at the end of life as we know it, they contend that dead is dead and there is nothing remaining afterward. Their life premise then is to make the most of this world while possible. It's the old adage of "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die." Well one day you will die; we all will. None of us — believers and non-believers — will die being afforded the ability to take our toys, possessions and money. All will be left for someone else to squander.

### **BELIEVERS OF REINCARNATION**

Jesus never taught that you'd get 15 lives, or 100 lives to get it right. No. Jesus taught we have one life to live. Thankfully in this one life, we have enormous daily possibilities to learn to get it right. It is insane to believe that Aunt Josephine is now a dog living a comfortable life in Arizona. There is no soul, no connection to the Lord God except for his ability to send you back to "get it right", which never happens. But reincarnation prescribes to such false beliefs.

Those believing in reincarnation may or may not believe in a God or in a heaven. If they do, this belief also says no one gets to heaven, lacking the perfected life necessary for a union with God. So they are reincarnated according to their goodness from the life that just ended. Been Bad? You may become a roach when you die. Be careful! Oh, and those ants you sprayed this morning? They may have been family members. This makes heaven sound really good.

### **A FEW REMNANTS**

We can't leave out the **New Age Movement** that encourages us to become gods and control our own destiny, making heaven the way we'd like it to be. The person who can make his/her own heaven has yet to be found. The sad fact is that with such a belief, when a person dies, god dies. In a similar way, **Zen Buddhism** compares to the most perfect form of Christian Contemplation. However, where Christian contemplation points to nothingness so that everything can be found in the one true God, the nothingness of Zen points to complete annihilation of the person.

### **RESURRECTED JOY IN HEAVEN**

We're told, and we believe, that with lives directed toward God and heaven, lives that reflect the truth of the scriptures, we will find ourselves on the road to perfection. This is not of our own making, but is done through the power of the Spirit of God and the wise use of the Spirit's gifts, which readily reveal God working in and through us — showing us a small bit of the joy and peace heaven that is ours in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*"...and you will have treasure in heaven." (Mt. 19:21)*