

Irrefutable Evidence

Is Hell for Real? – Part II

Revelation 20:12-13

Introduction

An ad campaign that originated in London, England, announces, “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.”



It was composed by a young atheist who was rather appalled by the idea – which was actually funny to her – that people would one day burn in hell. As a result, she created a slogan that would be certain to counteract the Christian doctrine of everlasting hell.

A news video was made on the launch date of this campaign to display the slogan on the side of the London buses. Richard Dawkins showed up for this and gave an interview. This man is a well known atheist and the author of the book entitled *The God Delusion*. In the book, he reasons that this life is all we have and afterwards, we cease to exist.

Richard Dawkins is actually giddy over communicating throughout the streets of London that there is probably no God, so people can stop worrying about accountability to Him and just enjoy their lives. He said in this interview that we can be no more certain about God’s existence than that of Father Christmas. Santa Claus is *possibly* living at the North Pole!

There have been satellites over the North Pole, as well as expeditions to the North Pole. Santa’s elves are no more there than Santa. There is no old man that goes around the world in six hours, and he cannot eat all the cookies and drink all the milk and still be able to steer his flying reindeer back home.

Are we really no more certain about God’s existence than Santa’s?

I remember creating a neighborhood crisis one December when I was about six years old. I had

asked my parents some questions about Santa Claus and they had told me he was just make-believe. They further told me that my Christmas presents came to me from my parents and grandparents, ultimately because of the provision and goodness of God.

That same December, unbeknownst to my parents, it became my driving passion to inform all my young neighborhood play mates that Santa Claus really did not exist and they were being told a lie. Soon, irate parents besieged my poor mother with phone calls asking how in the world her son could do such a thing to their children and ruin everything for them. One kid could not sleep.

My mother had no idea at the time that I was actually preparing for the ministry – telling people the truth, which just might ruin their sleep.

Now, just how have people responded to the London bus campaign?

The British Humanist Association had hoped to raise 5,000-10,000 pounds (\$10,000-15,000) to cover the expenses of the campaign. However, people have been so enthusiastic that the association has already received more than 150,000 pounds (about \$200,000) to create more advertisements.

People have actually rented the busses carrying these ads and taken them on tour beyond the city of London. They are excited over their collective courage to come out and effectively say, “God is no more real than Santa Claus.”

This is what Richard Dawkins really means – tongue-in-cheek, of course – the reality of God’s existence is as likely as the reality of the existence of Santa Claus.

The American Humanist Association has climbed on board the bus campaign too. They designed a slogan that subtly picks up on Dawkins' comment about Father Christmas.



Last year this association began running an advertisement on the sides of busses in Washington, D.C. that reads, "Why believe in a god [little "g"]? Just be good for goodness' sake."ⁱ

This slogan is a play on words from the children's Christmas song about Santa Claus. In other words, "Just be good whether or not you believe in some final accountability before God, Santa Claus, or whomever."

Now, if someone does not quite pick up on this slogan's subtle message that Santa Claus and God belong in the same category of myth . . .



. . . the smaller ads inside the American busses have a picture of someone actually dressed in a Santa Claus suit. The underlying message is clearly implied that believing in God is just as silly as believing in Santa Claus.

Intelligent people do not believe in Santa Claus, and this means intelligent people do not believe in God. Only children believe in Santa Claus – unless they lived in my neighborhood – so the implicit message is that only children believe in God. In other words, "C'mon, it's time to grow up and to wise up!"

To these unbelievers the apostle Paul would write under the inspiring direction of the Holy Spirit that they are . . .

Professing to be wise, [but are actually] fools (Romans 1:22)

They are foolishly repressing the internally intuitive truths and externally visible evidences of God.



In the interview with The British Humanist Association that sponsored the London bus campaign, the question was asked, "Why does your slogan include the words, 'Now stop worrying'?"

"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying..."

They answered that it was because Christians talk about "an eternity of torment in a lake of fire [and that's] pretty worrying." They wanted to send out a more positive message.

In other words, "We don't want a message that will make us worry about God; we want a message that will make us happy without God."

They went on to say, "We have only one life and must make the most of it . . . [because] death is the end of our personal existence."

They also quoted Robert Ingersoll, a nineteenth century humanist, who said, "The time to be happy is now!"ⁱⁱ

These are not only deceptive lies, they are old lies. They are the same as a lie that began in the Garden of Eden when the first human beings were tempted by the serpent to effectively disassociate their future from any accountability to God. The serpent said, "Eve, if you eat this fruit, don't worry, nothing bad will happen." (Genesis 3:4 paraphrased)

In other words, "Stop worrying about the future and enjoy your life now."

The trouble is that we cannot really enjoy this life until we have answered with certainty the question of an afterlife. We really are not prepared to live . . . until we are prepared to die.

Why are people all around the world worshiping planets and stars and idols, burning roots, bathing in the Ganges, performing rituals, sacrificing animals, and chanting to unseen spirits?

Because mankind knows there is something beyond this life and he is intuitively trying to get ready for it. Mankind senses the truth of God that is

written on his heart that this brief life is not all there is.

The advertisements boldly say, “C’mon, stop worrying about that. Don’t even think about it. There’s probably no God, so stop worrying and enjoy your life.”

Imagine the Food and Drug Administration taking this approach. Labels on food products would read, “The level of insecticides and poisons in this package is *probably* safe. Now stop worrying and enjoy what could be your last meal.”

Would you buy a television, computer, or car from a salesman who says, “Look, it will *probably* work. Don’t worry, just sign here.”?

Imagine the pilot coming over the loudspeaker and saying, “As far as I know, during our flight, the engines will *probably* work. We *probably* have enough gasoline to make it. I can *probably* land the plane when we get there.”

Would you say, “That’s fine.”?

No! There are thousands of situations in life in which we would never be satisfied with “probably”.

It is ironic that although we want certainty in life that computers work, food is clean, airplanes can fly, and the pilot knows how to land safely, there are those who would settle for probabilities about life after death. Why would anyone settle for less than certainty about life after death?

One reason it that if there is life after death, then, according to the revelation of Jesus Christ, delivered by the apostle John, the accountability that mankind so fears, detests, and denies will indeed take place.

Turn in your Bible to the point at which we ended our last study – the last paragraph of Revelation chapter 20.

The Unforgettable Setting

We first noted the unforgettable setting in Revelation 20:11.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

The prophetic aorist “ephugen” (εφουγεν) predicts the departure of the old creation – the word pictures a sudden and violent termination of the physical universe.ⁱⁱⁱ

This lets us know that the great white throne judgment of the unbelievers from all of human history takes place between the close of the

millennial kingdom and the creation of a new heaven and new earth. Therefore we read of this terrifying event that seals the doom of the unredeemed taking place in a courtroom suspended in limitless space.

If there was any doubt of accountability before God, the Bible is now vindicated in its repeated warning. David wrote centuries ago,

. . . [God] has established His throne for judgment,

and He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment of the peoples with equity.

(Psalm 9:7a-8)

Paul warned the citizens of Athens that . . .

. . . [God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness . . .
(Acts 17:31a)

Nearly fifty times throughout Revelation, there is the mention of the throne of God in all its majesty, splendor, and terrifying glory. It is the seat of God’s sovereign rule.^{iv}

Now the moment has arrived.

The words “there’s probably no God” will haunt many who denied His existence.

“Enjoy your life” has been the slogan not only for atheists, but for billions all over the world who have lived their lives according to their own dictates and determinations.

This great white throne will be the final vindication of the character of God before the unredeemed that God always keeps His word, and His word is always right, just, and true.

This is the unforgettable setting.

The Unavoidable Summons

The population of the unredeemed has heard the unavoidable summons and their bodies have resurrected from where they had crumbled into dust. Their bodies are now immortalized and fitted for eternal punishment in this resurrection unto death. Verses 5 and 6 of Revelation chapter 20 inform us that there will be a literal physical resurrection of the unredeemed dead following the millennial kingdom.

As we studied in our last session, not one unbeliever can escape this summons. No one will be able to pull the dirt up over their head and hope they can avoid the judgment.

Just as the believers are physically raised immediately after death and reunited with their souls

which have been with Christ (II Corinthians 5:8), the bodies of unbelievers will be physically raised and reunited with their souls which have been incarcerated in Hades following their deaths (Luke 16).

It will make no difference whether the bodies and souls of unbelievers have been separated by death for one day or 5,000 years. No matter where they died or how widespread the remains of their bodies, their souls in Hades will be reunited with their resurrected bodies.

The ancients of John's day believed that if someone died at sea – or had their ashes tossed into the waves of the ocean – that even the gods would never be able to put them back together for an afterlife. This is one of the reasons the Egyptians mastered mummifying their leaders – keeping the body together as much as they could so that nothing would be disturbed in the afterlife.

According to John's Revelation, the God of creation is no Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, or American God. He will be able to summon the unbelievers' ashes from the four points of the compass and recreate their bodies. This time, however, their bodies will be capable of lasting an eternity of torment as God summons their souls from Hades and their bodies from the earth so that their reunited being – just as in life – can stand before the throne of God.

This is the unavoidable summons and the unforgettable setting. Now I want you to notice another aspect of this great trial.

An Undeniable Standard

Notice Revelation 20:12a.

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life . . .

The Greek word that is translated “books” is “biblia” (βιβλία), from which we get our transliterated word “Bible”. It simply means “scrolls or books” and is plural.

We are not told how many books God opened or what these books are.

However, the first observation I want to make is this: not only is man accountable to God, but God has been keeping track. To the horrifying discovery of mankind, an omniscient, omnipresent God has kept a record of everything.

Lest someone think this is a mass judgment and that God does not really focus on one person, as verse 12 could suggest, the language of verse 13 clarifies individual judgment. Notice verse 13.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one according to his deeds.

“Hekastos” (ἑκαστος) is translated “every one,” and could actually be translated even more woodenly as “each one”. Each individual person is judged by God.^v

This is the epitome of individual accountability before God.

This verse is not alone in teaching singular judgment. Jesus Christ delivered this chilling prophecy in Matthew 16:27,

. . . the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father . . . and will then repay every man according to his deeds.

Paul wrote in Romans 2:6 that God . . .

. . . will render to each person according to his deeds

This is the moment when it will occur. No longer bound by the normal structures of time and space, God will individually confront every unbeliever with irrefutable evidence that calls for a guilty verdict and an everlasting sentence.

“And books were opened” begins the terrifying moment mankind has intuitively dreaded, denounced, denied, or at least downplayed.

John introduces us to only one of the titles of these books – the one scroll he calls “the book of life”. This is the book that includes the names of the redeemed. It is the register of the citizens of heaven; the passport from this country to the King's country.

Outside this paragraph, however, there are at least five books mentioned in the Bible that could be introduced as evidence by the great Judge as He calls each individual member of lost humanity to step up to His bench.

You might ask, “How much time would it take for God to judge every member of lost humanity?”

I do not know, but I do know the amount of time it takes will not matter. Time will be uniquely different as this courtroom is suspended in limitless space – without earth beneath or heaven above and no sight of planets, constellations, or galaxies.

In this courtroom there will just be all the unredeemed standing before the Redeemer they did

not want, while believers, as we have already learned, will be seated around His throne with the myriad of angels.

What exactly are the books that are included when we read the phrase, “and the books were opened”?

1. The Book of God’s Law

The Bible, in Romans 2:15, tells us that in man...

... [God’s] law [is] written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness ...

... to the testimony of this book of the law.

One of the books could be nothing more than *the Book of God’s Law*. God will open it to reveal that each person standing before Him is in violation of His perfect standard; each person is a sinner with a record of offenses that add guilt upon guilt.

2. A Book of Actions

There is also the promise of Jesus Christ to repay every person according to what they have done.

One of these books could be a *Book of Actions*.

... God will bring every act into judgment... (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

Perhaps the immortal bodies and minds of unbelievers will be capable of remembering and rehearsing every detail of every act that God pulls from the *Book of Actions*, identified as evidence against them.

Someone might say, “I did a lot of good things! Why aren’t they balancing the scales of justice?”

My friend, because God knows the heart, He knows the motive behind the good things that were done. He will pull the mask off motives at this judgment day and reveal that the good things done were internally motivated to make the person feel good about themselves.

They would not admit it, or stop long enough to critically, consciously challenge themselves, but God will. When they helped the poor, they enjoyed most the fact that they felt better about themselves. When they went to church or gave money to a good cause, it was inwardly motivated to make themselves look better to others or to feel more confident about themselves. Being a good neighbor or a good sport looked good on the outside, but God, who knows the secrets of the heart, knew it was internally motivated by a desire to sound good and seem good, if not superior, to other people.

God will pull back the curtain of the hidden motives and reveal that unbelievers did the good they did to:

- feel good;

- look good;
- seem good;
- sound good.

This is like the Pharisees who prayed long prayers, fasted, and gave their tithes. Jesus Christ said of them,

... you are like whitewashed tombs ... (Matthew 23:2)

In other words, “You look good and clean, but you’re covering over a grave of corruption and sin.”

3. A Book of Words

Jesus said,

... by your words you will be condemned. (Matthew 12:37)

So, thirdly, there is a *Book of Words*.

Christ also, in the same chapter, warned the unbelievers,

... every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36)

This judgment is so precise, so exacting that every word uttered in violation to the holy standard of God will be brought out as evidence.

4. The Book of Secrets

Not only are actions and words weighed against the law of God, there is another book and it is the *Book of Secrets*.

We are told that ...

... God will judge the secrets of men ... (Romans 2:16)

David reinforces this truth as he writes, *Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart. (Psalm 44:21)*

Do you know what this means? It means that these actions and sins had remained a secret. They were undiscovered until this day.^{vi}

Until now, these things had never been found out. The unbeliever thought, “I got away with it!”

No ...

... you ... [can] be sure your sin will find you out. (Numbers 32:23b)

Why is the believer not at this judgment, since he has certainly sinned too? He is not there because his sins – his actions, his words, his secrets – have been forgiven. There is no record of the believer’s sins – no tapes, files, books, or DVDs.

I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist...for I have redeemed you. (Isaiah 44:22)

I, even I, am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins. (Isaiah 43:25)

Peter preached,

Repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away (Acts 3:19)

We also read,

I am writing to you . . . because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. (I John 2:12)

How could this be? How could God take away my guilt of sin and my record of iniquity?

Isaiah writes how.

. . . He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him.

(Isaiah 53:5-6)

The believer will not be judged for his words, his actions, his secrets, or any of his sins because there is no record of them anymore. The record has been wiped clean. The deeds have been deleted; the iniquities have been erased.

Isaiah rejoiced when he recorded,

. . . it is You [O Lord] who has kept my soul from the pit of destruction; for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. (Isaiah 38:17)

Those who will be condemned are condemned by the record of their sins; the evidence against them is just and true. They are receiving a fair trial, and all the evidence against them could have been eliminated with one shout of Christ,

. . . "It is finished!" . . . (John 19:30)

They refused to settle out of court. They are standing at this judgment because they refused the gospel.

You might say, "Wait a second! More than half the world doesn't even have a Bible. They've never heard the name of Jesus. How could God send them to hell when they've never heard the gospel?"

Ladies and gentlemen, God will not condemn them to hell because they refused to believe in Jesus Christ – notice in this paragraph that they are held accountable to their own works, words, secrets, and sins. There is no mention of a time in their lives when they heard about Christ and said, "I don't want Him to be my Savior."

Do you realize that most of the world has never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ? They will not be

judged by the light they never heard or saw. They will be judged according to the light they did have and rejected.

- **The gospel of conscience**

According to Romans chapter 2, everyone may not have the gospel of Christ, but they have the gospel of conscience.

Paul wrote in Romans 2:15 that every man has...

. . . the law [of God] written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness . . .

In other words, the unbeliever – no matter where he lived or how much he knew about the Bible – had an ongoing conversation with his conscience – the inner voice that told him the things he was doing were sinful.

God will reveal on this judgment day that the condemned refused to listen to their conscience. They, instead, came up with their own standard that salvaged their conscience, settled it down, and silenced it.

Mankind created his own standards and felt good about them. As a result, he thought, "I must be okay!"

This was perfectly illustrated in the case of an armed robber named Dennis Lee Curtis who was arrested in 1992 in Rapid City, South Dakota. In his wallet was found a sheet of paper on which was written his code of conduct:

- I will not kill anyone unless I have to;
- I will take cash and food stamps – no checks;
- I will rob only at night;
- I will not wear a mask;
- If I get chased in a vehicle, I will not put the lives of innocent civilians on the line;
- I will rob only seven months out of the year;
- I will enjoy robbing from the rich to give to the poor.

He had a sense of morality – he knew certain things were out of bounds – but his sense of morality was flawed. When he stood before the court, he was not judged by the standards he had set for himself, but by the higher law of the state.^{vii}

Those who stand before this Judge will not be judged by their own personal code of morality, but against the standard of God's holiness.

- **The gospel of creation**

God will also reveal on this judgment day that the condemned refused to listen to gospel of creation.

David wrote in Psalm 19:1-3,

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard.

I love the paraphrase of these verses in *The Message*,

God's glory is on tour in the skies, God[s] craft[s] on exhibit across the horizon.

Madame Day holds classes every morning, Professor Night lectures each evening.

Their words aren't heard, their voices aren't recorded, but their silence fills the earth: unspoken truth is spoken everywhere.

The unredeemed may not have believed the gospel of Christ, but they also would not believe the gospel of conscience or the gospel of creation.

Let me add that a person cannot be born again unless he has accepted the gospel of Christ. However, since most of humanity never has, the unbeliever will be judged and found guilty because they refused to believe the gospel they did hear and see – the gospel of conscience and the gospel of creation.

Paul wrote in Romans chapter 1,

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Without excuse!

By the way, the reason creationism is so vehemently denied is because creation requires a Creator, and a Creator demands accountability.

Charles Darwin, raised in the church, pursued something other than Christianity and its accompanying creationism simply because of this accountability before God and the doctrine of hell.

In his autobiography, Darwin wrote, “I can hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this

would include my father, brother, and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished.”^{viii}

Darwin’s inward motive was fueled by a desire to come up with an answer to origins apart from a creator God. His reason was because he was honest enough with the record of scripture to know that if the existence of God was true, the Bible would also be telling the truth about a place called hell. For Darwin, this was completely unacceptable.

You might say, as I did until recently, “I didn’t know that.”

This courtroom will explode open the secrets and motives of hearts and minds. Everything will be revealed for what it truly was, and no one will have any excuse.

By the way, just because someone believes in a Creator and listens to the conscience speak of sin does not mean they will automatically be allowed into heaven.

Major world religions whose adherers do believe in a Creator and in the concept of sin and conscience – like Islam, Judaism, and even the minor cults of Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses – are the same religions that borrow from the Bible, yet deny the unique deity of Jesus Christ as God incarnate.

In other words, while they believe in the gospel of conscience and the gospel of creation, they deny the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their denial of the gospel of Christ will be revealed in the books of their actions, words, and secrets.

We are given this picture: every person standing before God at the great white throne will be condemned by their failure to meet God’s standard in their own actions, words, and secrets. Every one of them will be shown to have rejected whatever gospel they had – the gospel of conscience, the gospel of creation, or the gospel of Christ.

5. The Bible

There is a fifth possible book that could be opened in this courtroom – simply the Book we are studying, the Bible.

God may very well pull texts from His inspired, eternal, inerrant word and apply it to the condemned that stand before Him.

Understand that this courtroom is not to determine whether or not a person is going to be sent to hell; the person is here because they are already going there. This judgment is not weighing their good deeds and their bad deeds to see if they had enough good deeds to go to heaven. They are being judged by their deeds so that the degree of their

punishment can be determined, proven, and sentenced. We will study this further in our next study time.

I regularly take my family's trash to the neighborhood recycling and garbage collection station located between my home and the church. At the dump are several huge green containers delivered by trucks, and the metal gates are opened so people can go in and throw their trash into these massive containers. Taking my trash there saves me about twenty-five bucks a month, but the truth is, it is fun.

All I have to do is open our kitchen door that leads into the garage and, with one swift throw, I can toss a bag of trash squarely into the back of my pick-up truck. I have gotten good at this and I do not mind telling you, since it is one of the few sports I have time to play!

I go by the dump once or twice a week. Over time, I have gotten to know some of the men who work there by name. One of them is a believer and my minute or two there always includes some words of encouragement between us. What a sweet saint of God the man is.

The dump is an interesting place frequented by some rather rugged looking people and a lot of construction workers who come to unload their trash. This past week I happened to pull up next to a construction crew. When I got out of my truck they were about to leave and I overheard one of the guys saying to the other men, "Well, you know, our bodies are just gonna be eaten by worms and that's it; that's the end."

I could tell I had arrived at the tail end of a theological discussion. I was disappointed I missed it, so I tried to extend it by quickly saying to these guys, "Whaddya mean by that?"

One guy looked at me and said, "When we die, our bodies, like that trash in there, get eaten by worms and that's it."

I replied, "No, that is not the end."

He said, "It isn't?"

The rest of the crew stopped to listen; the workers stopped to listen; birds stopped in midair to listen. These guys were bigger than me and, for some reason, I had just decided to tell all of them about hell. If they had thrown me in, I would have never been found.

It was actually a great opportunity and they listened to everything I said. It lasted no more than a minute as the crew chief got into the driver's seat and revved the engine up.

My final comment was directed to the one construction crew member who seemed the most interested. I said, "Read Revelation chapter 20."

He repeated it back to me as he got into the pick-up. I heard him say, "Okay, Revelation chapter 20. I'll do it."

They were then gone. I have already prayed that I will see that guy in heaven one day. Revelation chapter 20 is enough to save.

What about you? I have prayed for you too – everyone listening to my voice – that this study would be enough.

I do not know your record of sin and I do not need to know, but what I do know is that you cannot go back and start over; no one can go back. However, you can make Jesus Christ your living Lord and Messiah, and today, you can start over.

Even better than this, although you cannot go back and start a new beginning, is that you can come to the cross of Jesus Christ and make a new ending. Let me make this point again:

You cannot have a new beginning, but you can have a new ending.

Your beginning cannot be changed no matter what you do, but your ending can be changed from an ending forever in hell, to an ending forever in heaven!

ⁱ <http://www.humanism.org.uk/bus-campaign>, 2/20/10.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert L. Thomas, *Romans: Volume 2* (Moody Press, 1995), p. 429.

^{iv} John MacArthur, *Revelation: Volume 2* (Moody Press, 2000), p. 247.

^v Thomas, p. 433.

^{vi} Sam Gordon, *Worthy is the Lamb: A Walk Through Revelation* (Ambassador, 2000), p. 417.

^{vii} Craig Brian Larson, *Choice Contemporary Stories and Illustrations* (Baker Publishing Group, 1998), p. 181.

^{viii} David A. DeWitt, *History of Life, Fourth Edition* (Creation Curriculum, 2009), p. 40.