

Who is going to hell?

In recent months in Nigeria, there have been these videos going around in which some women supposedly went to hell after dying, on a kind of guided tour of the place, and I guess also of heaven. After some time they were revived and they reported their encounters. Their report has had a lot of people scared and many are changing their ways.

Now, I believe there is a hell and also a lake of fire of eternal damnation (I am not at this time making a distinction between the two); God prepared this place(s) for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41). From the context of the passage in Matthew's gospel, we know that God not only sends the devil and demons there but also anyone who rejects His will in his or her lives. For this reason it is necessary to fear lest one finds himself or herself thrust into such a place. It has to be a fearful place. Whether the fire is literal or figurative is secondary to the fact that it is an established place of torment, and it is to be feared.

Some have argued that a good God will never send people to hell; that argument is very faulty since we know that a good judge on the earth has to send criminals to prison. The question is whether people deserve it or not, not at all about the goodness of God. For what the devil and both his spiritual and human followers have done, they *will* be sent to hell, and it is right. The goodness of God does not mean He should shy away from applying punishment when necessary; He must still do that which is right and just. His goodness only means He shows a righteous form of compassion.

Compassion is what makes God warn people about these things and to provide the remedy so that all who desire it may be delivered from the judgment to come.

*And the Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, **because He had compassion** on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy. 2 Chron 36:15-17 NASB**

God will send you to hell if you qualify; He won't feel good about it but, trust me, He will do it.

Having established the above I wish to comment on the videos making the rounds and the response of people to them. I have not seen any of the videos (I don't even know how many they are), I am therefore only commenting on what I hear people say about them, and what changes I have heard people make as a result of watching the video.

I wish these videos had been generating the true fear of God in people, but unfortunately they have not. All I have seen is confusion created in the lives of many.

I heard it said that one of the hell visitors also went to heaven and in heaven found very few women; when she wondered why, she was told that it was because of the make-up (cosmetics) most women apply to their faces, the wearing of jewellery, together with the use of artificial additions to their hair (attachments, weave-on's) and such things. For this reason many women, upon watching these videos, have discarded the use of all these things so they can 'make' heaven. My wife told me of a woman she

knows, who when she saw recently was hard to recognize for her. The young woman had transformed and now went without any adornment of any sort. Her clothes had increased markedly in length. All her adornments, jewellery and all, had been set on fire, all so as to make heaven. I also heard of a woman who burnt her entire set of hair dressing equipment (she was hitherto a hair-dresser) so as to avoid hell fire.

A number of people have come to me to ask questions as a result of seeing both the videos themselves and the effect in the lives of people as narrated above. As a matter of fact, I initially didn't feel this thing was worthy of my comments, but since people keep asking I decided to give a simple answer from the Bible.

The basis of doctrine is the written word

First of all let me say this: Doctrines are never to be built on personal experiences. No matter the vision or the person, doctrine must be built on the word of God. Paul said '*all scripture... is profitable for doctrine*' (2 Tim 3:16). The following verses of Paul are also instructions to bear in mind.

*But even though we, or **an angel from heaven**, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Gal 1:8-9*

*Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, **even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us.** 2 Thess 2:2-3 NLT*

Visions can only confirm what is written in the word of God. Anyone may have a vision, but it must align with the written word of God for us to even consider acting upon it. At least, it should not disagree with the word of God. I don't care who the people are; in fact the Lord Jesus told us that it is not really necessary to send messengers from heaven or hell to people on the earth because there are enough preachers and scriptures around to help people believe if they are willing to believe (Luk 16:31). What I hear of these recent accounts of visits to hell disagree with the word of God.

When judging, God looks here

Next I wish to show how God judges people.

Whenever God wants to judge, He looks at the heart.

...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Sam 16:7-8

But I, God, search the heart, and examine the mind.

I get to the heart of the human.

I get to the root of things.

I treat them as they really are,

not as they pretend to be. Jer 17:10 THE MESSAGE

If anyone tells you that God judges and sends people to hell because of their clothes, jewellery and make-up, then the fellow is not talking about the God of the Bible, the Father of our Lord Jesus. Listen,

God will NEVER send any person, man or woman, to hell because of their outward appearance. God judges people for having a heart of disobedience toward Him and for the heart of wickedness in relating with their fellow human beings.

You will not find even one place in the whole Bible, especially in the words of Jesus, where people were sent into damnation because of what they wore or the jewellery they used. Anointing of faces (creams and make-up) is not a new thing; it was practiced in the days of Jesus, Paul and Peter and they NEVER said it is a reason why God sends anyone into damnation. When Peter spoke in 1 Pet 3, he was saying true Christian beauty is not about external appearance but the inward quality of a godly heart; it was not a ban on dressing of hair.

Christians are supposed to dress decently and modestly. We are to look good but not 'sexy' or expose parts of our body so as to seduce people (some parts of the body are called *private* for good reasons). The Bible talked about the attire of a harlot (Prov 7:10) and a good Christian woman will avoid such. Once you don't have 'sexy' in your heart, trying to show us your body or vainly displaying your wealth, then augmenting your face, using jewellery are not at all against modest dressing (Ez 16:10-14). The virtuous woman was described as being very well dressed (Prov 31:22). Again let me state – the most important dressing for a woman, and anyone for that matter, is a fine character (Prov 31:30). I am emphasizing however that it is not against the will of God for a woman to be adorned externally. Decency and modesty are the watch words of Christians. God never said women should not wear jewellery and therefore will not send them to hell for it. Whoever said God told her He sent people to hell for wearing weave-on or jewellery saw a God that is not the one of the Bible.

What many people now practice is a form of self-righteousness; they are trying to get a feeling of righteousness by punishing themselves in a manner not commanded by the Lord. But Paul warns thus:

*Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial... **saying they have had visions about these things.** Col 2:18 NLT*

Before getting to the real substance, let us briefly see things that are stated clearly as reasons God may send someone into eternal damnation.

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev 21:8

Please notice that no one was put in there for the kind of clothes and jewellery they wore or the kind of hairstyles they had. The sins are sins of the heart which manifests in evil deeds. I noticed that those people who are claiming they went to hell did not identify these kinds of people listed in the verse above there but were seeing mundane things like clothing and cosmetics. Recollect the young lady my wife told me about which I mentioned earlier; I told my wife to tell her that it is okay to change her looks the way she did (it's a free world, isn't it?), but that she should realize that she will go to hell faster if she harbours any evil thoughts about anyone, borrows without repaying, is envious of anyone or goes to bed with a man she is not married to. Those are the 'weightier matters of the law!'

The big deal

Now let us get down to the main thing in all these.

The most important reason anyone will be cast into eternal damnation is simply because his or her name is not found in the lamb's book of life.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev 20:18

This is the safety that we have in life – to be in Christ Jesus. That is how your name will get written in the book of life. God will NEVER send into eternal damnation anyone whose name is found in the book of life. All true Christians have their names in the lamb's book of life and so no true Christian, none, is going to hell or will be cast into the lake of fire.

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. John 3:18-20

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. John 5:24

Faith in Jesus and attachment to Him (Jn 8:31) is what gets your name written into the Lamb's book of life. Once you are a true disciple of Jesus, weave-on or no weave-on, your name is written in God's book of life.

Faith in Jesus is the security. All the deeds of those who do not believe are only reflections of the fact that they do not believe. The real thing that God judges is refusal to accept His forgiveness.

Truly, forgiveness is in the name of Jesus and not in our own works. By our own labour we cannot please God or walk above sin. That is why God brought forgiveness in His blood.

...the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:12-14 NKJV

God, in Christ, is the one keeping us, and will never let us go into eternal damnation once we hold on to the faith that we have in Him.

Can a Christian ever go into eternal damnation?

Can a Christian ever lose his salvation and be cast into the lake of fire?

That a Christian's name can be erased from the book of life is clear from the following verse.

***'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.'* Rev 3:5**

This implies that the possibility exists. Also see this!

Some people once had God's light. They experienced the heavenly gift and shared in the Holy Spirit. They experienced the goodness of God's word and the powers of the world to come. Yet, **they have deserted Christ**. They are crucifying the Son of God again and publicly disgracing him. Therefore, they cannot be led a second time to God. Heb 6:4-6 GOD'S WORD Translation.

For how can those who abandon their faith be brought back to repent again? They were once in God's light; they tasted heaven's gift and received their share of the Holy Spirit; they knew from experience that God's word is good, and they had felt the powers of the coming age. And **then they abandoned their faith!**... Heb 6:4-6 TEV

So we see clearly that it is possible for a Christian to walk away from his or her faith. That is what is called apostasy – a Christian who denies the Lordship of Jesus and begins to walk in sin as if he never knew the Lord Jesus. That person loses his safety in Christ and yes, that kind of person will go into eternal damnation. Otherwise, a true Christian is not going to hell!

We are not going to heaven because of our own works but because of the work of Jesus which we receive by faith. Our lives of righteousness are just manifestations of true faith.

What if a Christian sins one way or the other but hasn't denied the faith or the Lord Jesus?

If a Christian sins but has the faith of Jesus still in his or her heart, such a person should confess his sin and forgiveness is guaranteed.

But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light... the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:7-9

A single act of sin is not what God uses to send people to hell, but a life that is basically one of disobedience. If God sends people to hell because of every little thing that is done wrong, then NOBODY, apart from the Lord Jesus, will ever get to heaven.

*If you kept a record of our sins, who could escape being condemned?
But you forgive us, so that we should stand in awe of you. Ps 130:3-4 TEV*

This is not to say a Christian should make sinning a habit because God forgives. Anyone who is like that, who thinks that because God forgives he or she can go on sinning, such a one is NOT a true Christian. Such a person is condemned already!

What shall we say, then? Should we continue to live in sin so that God's grace will increase? Certainly not! We have died to sin — how then can we go on living in it? Rom 6:1-3 TEV

A true Christian does not enjoy sin; it is a problem to him. He hates doing it and may only *fall* into temptation. Falling into temptation is not the same as being a sinner. A sinner has sin as a habit because deep inside his or her heart there is no love for Christ. He may be born with good behaviour but basically in his heart Christ is absent. A Christian on the other hand loves God and is always trying to live a life of righteousness before God.

Who is a true Christian?

The fact today is that many who call themselves Christians are not so in reality. Christianity has become a social identity. Going to church is a popular thing these days in most parts of Africa, and for this reason many go. Many come to church for all kinds of needs in their lives to be met – they want husbands, children, prosperity, etc. – and they never really gave their lives to Christ. Interestingly, many of them are serious church members and may even become leaders. God may help them but He doesn't own them.

It is possible to be in church or working in ministry and not be a true Christian. If we take the followers of Jesus in the days of His flesh as Christians (without splitting hairs over whether there were Christian before His death and resurrection); then we can confidently say Judas was never a Christian. He was one of the close associates – one of the twelve, used to also go out to preach and must have been involved in the working of miracles. Yet he was never a Christian in the sense of how the others were. I know because Jesus said as much.

Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot... John 6:70-71

The Lord also warned about false Christians and disciples.

"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. Matt 7:22-23

Please notice that they couldn't have been attempting to lie to Him on that day when they claimed to have done things in His name. They actually thought that they were safe because they were doing some work for God, but it is clear that being in ministry doesn't even make someone a Christian—the Lord never knew them.

So, who is a true Christian?

A true Christian is not one who was born into a Christian or good family. A Christian is not a man who obeys laws, even the laws of Moses given by God. No! A Christian is one who has deliberately given his or life to Christ. It is someone who has repented of his former life and has said to Jesus, "take my life and work in it." He is one who heard the gospel preached, believed it intelligently and made a personal commitment to faith in Jesus. Being baptized as a child or being dedicated in church as a child does not make you a Christian; it may only prove that your parents were Christians when you were born. That is all!

The life of a true Christian is characterised by love for the word of God. A true believer wants his or her life to conform to the word of God.

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32 NLT

A true Christian is not trying to get from God or following Him for the miracles promised. Rather a true Christian is one who follows God because he or she wants to become like Christ. The true Christian is following after righteousness.

A true believer in Christ is the one who the blood of Jesus has washed, and continues to wash. His righteousness is by faith, and is a gift of God.

Are you are true Christian? Have you indeed made a commitment to live every day for Jesus and not yourself?

If your answer is 'Yes,' then believe me; you will NOT go to hell. You can't because you do not belong there.

Make-up, trousers, hair attachment, jewellery, and such things do not send anybody to hell; disregard any vision or dream that says otherwise since such cannot be of God!

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**Unless where otherwise marked, all Bible verses quoted are NASB*