

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“God Spoke To My Heart”

By Larry Ray Hafley

Many proclaim their personal salvation because “*God spoke to my heart and saved me.*” Why not accept such a claimant? Why do we not believe their testimony and receive him into the temple of God?

First, if we accept his claim, how do we deny similar visions and visits when given by Jews, Muslims, and pagan witch doctors? They, too, have had “experiences” with Deity. Upon what basis do we denounce their cases as fraudulent and deniable while pronouncing ours as faithful and reliable?

Second, Scripture shows that one’s devout faith in his “divine” encounters is not determinant; that is, they do not establish the truthfulness of one’s appeals. (a) Beyond doubt, the prophets of Baal believed their Lord was the true God (1 Kgs. 18:21-40). Also, beyond doubt, they were wrong! (b) The people of Samaria sincerely felt that Simon was “*the great power of God,*” but they were in error (Acts 8:9-11). (c) Remember Saul of Tarsus? He believed that he was right in opposing the cause of Christ (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11). His experiences and personal testimony did not justify him. Despite his earnest enthusiasm, he was acting “*ignorantly in unbelief*” (1 Tim. 1:13). Later, the Lord spoke to him, but not to save him. Ananias was sent to tell him what he must do to be saved (Acts 9:6; 22:16). (d) One can deceive “*his own heart*” (Jas. 1:26). He may, therefore, deceive himself regarding whether or not God has “*touched*” his heart. The Holy Spirit verifies this conclusion. “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Prov. 14:12). “*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: t is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (Jer. 10:23).

Third, in no New Testament case of conversion did God speak to a man to save him. Neither by direct communication nor by angelic agency did the Lord ever speak to and save anyone. “*Faith cometh by hearing,*” by hearing “*the word of faith*” as preached by the apostles; we are brought to belief “*through their word*” (cf. Jn. 17:20; Rom. 10:8, 14, 17). Though it does not please some men, it has “*pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” (1 Cor. 1:21; 4:15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

Objections:

1. “Didn’t the Holy Spirit fall upon people in Acts 2?” The Spirit came upon the preachers, the apostles, *not* upon the audience (Acts 1:26-2:4, 37). Through the words of the apostles as given by the Spirit, men were led to faith and obedience (Acts 2:37, 40, 41; cf. Jn. 17:20; 2 Cor. 4:7; 5:18-20). It is so with us today. We have the apostolic word in the New Testament. We “*hear*” the apostles as those in Jesus’ day “*heard*” Moses and the prophets; that is, through their writings (cf. Lk. 16:31; Acts 13:27; 15:21; 2 Thess. 2:15).

2. “But what about the Ethiopian eunuch?” In this case, “*the angel of the Lord*” and “*the Spirit*” spoke unto the preacher (Acts 8:26, 29). So far as the treasurer knew, no heavenly intercession was involved. The Lord spoke to the eunuch, but he did so through human agency — “*Philip preached unto him Jesus*” (Acts 8:35).

3. “An angel of God spoke to Cornelius!” Yes, he did, but what did he tell him (Acts 10:3-6; 11:13, 14)? The angel told Cornelius, “*Send...for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*” Peter, neither the angel or the Lord, spoke the words by which Cornelius was saved. Peter said it was “*by my mouth*” that Cornelius “*should hear the...gospel and believe*” (Acts 15:7). Cornelius knew he must hear Peter’s words in order to know the commandments of God — “*We are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*” (Acts 10:33; cf. 10:48).

Conclusion: The consistent pattern of the accounts of conversion in the name of Christ included the preaching of the gospel to the sinner. There is no exception to this rule. “*When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart....And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized*” (Acts 2:4, 22, 29, 37, 40, 41). “*They...so spake, that a great multitude...believed*” (Acts 14:1). “*And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized*” (Acts 18:8).

Note a negative argument to this point. Paul spoke of Jews who had forbidden him *“to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved”* (1 Thess. 2:16). If he had spoken to them, they could be saved, but since they forbade his preaching, they could not be. *“Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts* (Why does he do this? Why does he take the word out of their hearts?) — *lest they should believe and be saved”* (Lk. 8:12).

Before one can trust in Christ and be saved, he must hear the gospel (Eph. 1:13). That faith comes by hearing the word of God as found in the New Testament. It can be received in no other way (1 Cor. 4:6, 15; 15:1-4, 11). — *Truth Magazine*, July 18, 2002, Page 3. ■

Seven Fundamental Facts About Hell

The subject of *hell* is often considered an unpopular subject with some. The fact that very few preachers of our “wise” society ever discuss the subject, suggests its unpopularity, or the false belief on the part of many that *hell* does not exist. Many people in our society believe, because of their immoral conduct and ungodliness, that *hell* does not exist and would deny that they or anyone else could go there. Yet in a rage or fit of anger, they would tell someone to this place. How many have you ever heard admit that they believe a relative or loved one or they themselves are going there? Please consider with me seven fundamental facts about hell:

First, it is a real place. The same Bible that teaches of heaven, teaches there is a place called *hell*. If the Bible says it is a real place, then that settles it! Since God’s *“word is truth”* (Jn. 17:17), and God *“cannot lie”* (Titus 1:2), and the fact is that Jesus warned his disciples of this place (Lk. 12:4-5), without a doubt, there is such a place.

Second, it is a horrible place. It is described more in terms of *“fire”* than any other figure of speech. It is described as an *“everlasting fire”* (Matt. 25:41); *“the fire that shall never be quenched”* (Mk. 9:43); *“a lake of fire”* (Rev. 20:15); a place of *“everlasting punishment”* (Matt. 25:46). It is not surprising that in this place *“there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt 13:42).

Third, it is a place anyone can go. There are many places I cannot go. I cannot go into a Mormon temple because I am not a Mormon and neither can you if you are not a Mormon. But, anyone can go to the place called *hell*. Because God is a God of love, many refuse to believe that he will allow anyone to go there (1 Jn. 4:8). But, God is a God of wrath as well. Paul taught of the *“goodness and severity of God”* (Rom. 11:22). God will deal severely with those who disobey him (Rom. 11:20). Listen to the words of Paul, *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”* (2 Thess. 1:7-9). All the disobedient will go there.

Fourth, it is a place of eternal duration. This place has no end; time stands still in this place. It is difficult for man to fathom eternity. Why? To everything in this life there is an end. Just as heaven is never ending, *hell* is never ending— it is eternal (Mk. 3:29; Heb. 6:2; Jude 7).

Fifth, it is the abode of great classes of people, even angels. The immoral will be there (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). Children of God or unfaithful brethren who become *“again entangled”* in the *“pollutions of the world”* will be there (2 Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 6:1-6; 10:23-31). The *“devil and his angels”* and all sinners will be there (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 21:8). Will you or I be there? We make the choice whether to be with God or Satan.

Sixth, it is a place of no escape. In this life, prisoners can escape from a prison to the outside world. But in *hell*, there is no place to escape; the world and all things therein will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:9-12). There will be no way to cross *“the great gulf fixed”* (Lk. 16:26). Remember, it is the place of *“everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”* (2 Thess. 1:9).

Seventh, it is a place that can be avoided. God is rich in mercy and grace, in that he sent his Son to die for those lost in sin. Since *“all have sinned”* (Rom. 3:23; 5:12), then all men must believe and obey the saving gospel of Christ to avoid this place (Rom. 1:16; Acts 10:35). The Hebrew writer expressed it well when he wrote, *“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Heb. 5:9). — *tgmc* ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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