



How Can Ye Escape Hell?

(Mat 23:29-33) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, {30} And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. {31} Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. {32} Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. {33} Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers [scorpions], how can ye escape the damnation of hell?



This month’s letter on the subject of ‘hell’ in the Bible takes us into Matthew 23:29-33. In this section, Jesus was confronting the scribes and Pharisees. In verse 29, he called them hypocrites. There is quite an interesting meaning behind this word, “an actor under an assumed character – a stage player.” Have you ever seen a character on stage, or in a movie? These folks are paid to act out as different people then they really are. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that they were stage players, fakes. Man oh man, I bet

that got them boiling mad! If you read this entire section, you will easily feel the wrath of Jesus as he nailed them on many issues.

They were so into doing things that made them look good, but they weren’t good. They were bad to the bone. They were so self centered that they believed they could do no wrong. That’s what they were talking about when they said, “if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” Jesus turned this right around and told them that they were the children of the same men who had killed the prophets, making these men, essentially, the same. Jesus then told them “fill ye up then the

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measure of your fathers.” He was telling them that they would follow suit – do the same thing!

Then comes verse 33:

{33} Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers [scorpions], how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

He called them snakes, sly and cunning, especially malicious, akin to satan. How do you like the boldness of Jesus? Don't you wish we had people today who weren't afraid to confront like he did? I sure do.

He called them a “generation of vipers.” “Vipers” means, “scorpions.” This was a terrible thing to say to someone in the East. It was used for very religious people who did not have the truth. Anyone in this category was of the generation of scorpions – orphans!

So, here we have terribly cunning and evil leaders, orphans from God's truth, highly malicious, thinking they could do no wrong. Jesus set them straight with the next part of verse 33.

“...how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” Wouldn't it be easy to say that there is a hell at this point? It sure would be nice to send such bad people there, if such a place existed, but that's not what this says at all. After all we have learned in this series' teachings, we know that there is no such place as “hell.” We know that we need to determine what the Greek word behind the English word is. The word “hell” is *gehenna*, meaning “city dump” where the fires burn continually. I'd like to quote from the August 2012 Artios. “The *gehenna* was used as a burial place, especially for undeserving people. Jesus never

called the city trash dump “hell.” The translators did. Jesus called it the city trash dump and cited exactly what happened there.”

He made it clear to these hypocrites, that, they too, would end up just like everyone else. The Bible says that every man will face death unless you are alive as a Christian at the return of Jesus Christ.

(Psa 89:48) What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

Apparently, they thought differently. Otherwise, Jesus never would have told them this.

What have we learned? Jesus was talking to scribes and Pharisees, Jewish leadership. They were very bad people, akin to satan himself. They considered themselves above

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the people in spiritual ranking and did their best to maintain this kind of distance. They were murderers, just like their fathers, and Jesus told them that they were going to fill up the measure of their fathers – do the same things. He then informed them that their fate was going to be like everyone else’s – they would eventually die and end up in the *gehenna* – the city dump.

In no place have we seen an actual reference to a place called hell. It just doesn’t exist, not even for these terribly corrupt leaders.

Next month, we’ll study a prophecy concerning Jesus being left in hell.

(Acts 2:27) Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Much love in Christ,

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