

**HELL** is  
**for REAL**  
**why it matters**



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**GARY FRAZIER**

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

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## **Dedication**

Writing this book has taken hours of prayer, research, application of knowledge gleaned over 40-plus years of Bible study, patience, and more prayer! However, I could not have completed this work without the constant encouragement of my gift from God — my precious wife who makes each day a little taste of heaven as we walk side by side along life's exciting journey heavenward.



## Contents

Foreword .....	11
Introduction.....	17
1. The Reality of Mortality .....	27
2. Fake Funerals and Perjured Preachers .....	35
3. Hell: The Suffering.....	53
4. Hell: The Separation.....	67
5. Hell: The Sorrow .....	75
6. The Departure.....	83
7. The Divine Appointment .....	99
8. The World Gets What It Wants.....	111
9. The Final Years .....	129
10. The Reign, the Revolt, and the Renewed World .....	139
Epilogue: It's a Wrap.....	149
Selected Glossary of Terms .....	161
About the Author .....	170





The ultimate tragedy is that all those who end in Hell will have chosen it. Instead of accepting that we are all sinners in need of the salvation of Jesus Christ, their pride condemns them to spiritual death. In the end, someone must be god of our lives. If we insist on being our own god, we shall succeed, but at the cost of an eternity in Hell.

— GRANT R. JEFFREY  
*Heaven: The Mystery of Angels*





# foreword

There has always been and I suspect always will be a keen quiet interest in what happens to us when we die. Granted, most of the discussion surrounding one's certain demise is relegated to a conversation upon the deathbed should one be fortunate enough to have that kind of earthly exit. For others, the conversation never takes place due to an unforeseen, sudden accident claiming their earthly lives. Rarely is there ever an open and honest talk about the reality of one's own mortality. Death seems to be a taboo topic, yet it is a certainty. Nonetheless, in these days of political upheaval on almost every continent coupled with a sense of hopelessness and loss of direction worldwide, there seems to be a renewed interest in the afterlife. Television programs, movies, and books abound with thoughts concerning the afterlife. Hollywood is in sync with this current trend and is seeking to give the public what the public wants — information and entertainment concerning the afterlife. Television presents us with titles such as *Forever* (with the subtitle *What could you do with eternity?*), *The Afterlife*, *Sea of Souls*, *Being Human*, *The Fades*, and many more.

While the media are hyping their philosophy concerning the future, others are looking into biblical prophecies and teachings surrounding the end times. The theme is prevalent in books, both Christian and secular, as well as in popular movies. To read or watch some of these works is to receive a potpourri of intrigue, mystery, make-believe, and the latest in special effects, with only a smattering of biblical truth.

It is in this climate that I welcome my good friend Gary Frazier's book, *Hell Is for Real*. Gary leads us on a quest for truth — truth about our future! Can we really know what our future holds? Does anyone have answers? Do all people go to heaven when they die? What really happens to us when we die? Using the story of a typical American family as a backdrop, Gary walks us through the sequence of events that is in the future for each of us. Through the eyes and experiences of the imaginary Rhodes family, we see the reality of death, eternity spent in heaven or in hell, the Rapture of the Church, the Judgment Seat of Christ or the *Bema*, the Marriage Supper, the Tribulation, the Second Coming, Armageddon, the millennial reign of Christ, and the Great White Throne Judgment. For some of you these are familiar terms, while for others I'm speaking a foreign language! These are all specific events and times that indeed will occur in the future. Only God knows when these events will take place. The specific dates will unfold according to His divine timetable. Gary explains this timetable in detail, defining the terminology and presenting the various theories or schools of thought surrounding the last days, as he is uniquely qualified to do so.

In recent years, Gary Frazier has virtually lived in the Holy Land, teaching, preaching, studying, and observing — first hand — the current issues and happenings in the Middle East and how they relate to the biblical prophecies surrounding that land. He has a great love and passion for Israel and its people as well as an unquenchable interest in events past, present, and

future surrounding its history. Because of this, I believe he has tremendous credibility as a teacher of future events.

Although *Hell Is for Real* is a theological study, it is illustrative and practical so that you do not have to be a theologian to understand it. Not only will you benefit from Gary's insight and instruction, but you will also experience his passion and sense of urgency for men and women to know God's plan for their lives and to receive His sacrificial offering of His only begotten Son.

Death — it's real, it's final, and as in the case of the Rhodes family, it will happen to you and to me one day. Hebrews 9:27 states, "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" We all have a reservation — one we will keep whether we want to or not. Heaven or hell!

So continue reading! When you do, you will discover gold in these pages as you are compelled to examine your own heart and life and are drawn to Jesus Christ — the One who will come again to rule and reign throughout eternity and before whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

— Ed Young, Senior Pastor  
Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas



For what shall it profit a man, if he  
shall gain the whole world, and lose his  
own soul?

— JESUS CHRIST  
Mark 8:36





# introduction

He's the cutest little boy I have ever seen in person or on screen! I'm referring to Connor Corum, who plays Colton Burpo in the recent movie *Heaven Is for Real*. When this little fellow looks up and smiles, the whole world lights up. I have no idea where they found him. Most likely, he's been acting since he was a toddler, but he is a find indeed and he simply melts your heart. Recently my wife, Sandra, and I watched this heartwarming, interesting movie, not seeking to discover if heaven is for real or not, since the Bible already tells us, but rather to see why so many of our friends found it — that is, the movie and the book — so compelling.

I had read the book not long after it first came out in 2011, simply because there was such a buzz about it among so many of the churches in which I was speaking. I was constantly being asked if I had read the book, and if so, what did I think about it? “Is it for real?” was the question I was asked over and over again. In order to be able to respond truthfully, I read *Heaven Is for Real* not once but twice. Through the years, I've read many books and articles about people who supposedly die and go to either heaven

or hell; frankly, I've dismissed most of them as fantasy, preferring instead to go to the Word of God with any questions I have had concerning the afterlife.

As we watched the movie, I began to get a very strong sense that while it was never stated, there was an underlying, subliminal message that I had not noticed while reading the book. That message, simply put, was that in the end, everyone goes to heaven! Everyone. Is this true? Do all people, no matter what they have said, done, or become in their days on earth, really end up in heaven? Where does this idea come from? Is this what the Bible teaches? Is this what God's Word says? Is this what Jesus taught? Is this what the Apostles understood? Is this what the New Testament Church preached and believed? And if this is true, then how do we get there — instantly, or is there some path we walk? Some philosophy we accept? Some creed to which we ascribe? Some prescribed circuitous route we take to get there? Do we really meet St. Peter at the gates of heaven and get asked to spell hippopotamus? Once we are there, do we remain a child, a teen, or adult? Are we locked into the same age as when we died? Are babies who die still babies? Do we, in fact, see all our relatives who have died before us, including those whom we never met on earth? Does Jesus take us by the hand and lead us around heaven on a grand sightseeing tour of time? Is it possible for one to return to earth and resume a normal life after such an experience?

Please understand that I am not attacking little Colton Burpo and the experience he claims to have had, and neither am I criticizing his parents, who told his story and their experiences. However, as a Christ follower, minister, and teacher of the Word of God for more than 40 years, I must say that while I loved the movie and the book before it, the movie is essentially just a Hollywood production. It's an entertaining way to spend approximately 99 minutes. The real issue at stake, however, is one that we must not view merely as entertainment or fantasy.

Why? Because death and eternity — not a movie — is our reality! Death is a coming attraction, and it's coming to your life! Death is a 100 percent certainty for every single human being who walks this planet. Each of us has a reservation, a divine appointment. Every kid in your class will die at some point! Every person in the office, the warehouse, the restaurant, the factory, or doctor's office where you work will die! Every neighbor on your street or in your building will end up in a grave! Every famous and infamous person will depart this life one day! This is not Hollywood. This is reality. Just look at the obituary page in your newspaper or on the web as proof of this. Every class reunion I attend, there are fewer and fewer of my classmates in attendance. In light of this stark and glaringly ominous truth, what am I, what are you, what are we to do?

Let me suggest that we begin with a search for truth. We must seek to find if there is a reliable source — one in which we can trust. Are the words of this four-year-old boy to be trusted? Was this precious child given the answers sought after by generations of people who have inhabited planet Earth? I'll let you make that decision for yourself at the end of our quest, but I urge you to first carefully ponder the facts I'll present. I urge you to choose wisely in light of what we will discover. This is not a decision you should make because the little boy is such a darling. Why? Simply put — what if the little boy is wrong? Your assessment should not be based on emotion. Why? Because emotions are feelings and you can't trust feelings.

What if everyone doesn't go to heaven in the end? What if even the majority of people don't go to heaven in the end? What about the people who claim to have died and gone to hell and yet returned? Are we to accept their story as well because their experience is vastly different from Colton Burpo's?

We will explore the answers to these questions in the remaining pages of this book. Together we will search for the

truth, and should we discover it, I will encourage each of us to act upon it. However, I do want you to know I have already done the search for us. I have discovered the truth that heaven is for real, but so is hell! How do we know this? The Bible! The Bible does not leave us ignorant of those things that are ahead. While it does not give every detail about the future and the life beyond, the Bible most definitely does give us all the “need to know” information to prepare for an eternal existence. It really comes down to whether or not you accept the authority of the Bible as God’s Word or you choose to ignore it and take man’s word concerning eternity. What if the Bible is right and man is wrong? Are you willing to take that gamble since the stakes are so high?

In the chapters ahead, we will explore the destiny of those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and those who have rejected Him as Lord of life. We will follow a time line, a chronology of coming attractions, if you please, of the events to come. Along that timeline, we will discover what will happen to both the believer — the one who chooses to accept Jesus Christ as Lord, the Bible and the truths contained within it, as well as the unbeliever — the one who chooses to ignore the Lord Jesus and biblical truth. The two will face starkly contrasting destinies.

In this context, you will be introduced to two generations of the fictional Rhodes family of Normal, Ohio. Harold Rhodes died in 1999 and went immediately to hell. His wife, Betty, followed him in death four years later. She loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and as a dedicated follower immediately went to be with her Lord Jesus in heaven. You will follow the destinies of these two senior Rhodes. Then you will meet Harold and Betty’s son, Henry, who is left behind at the Rapture of the Church when Jesus makes good on His promise to come collect His followers. Henry will live through the unprecedented trials of the Tribulation that come upon the world in the most horrific seven years

the world has experienced or ever will. At the same time, you will follow the destiny of Henry's wife, Helen, a devout believer who experiences the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Second Coming of Jesus, the thousand-year reign of Christ, and the eternal order. Please do not let these terms bewilder you, as each of them will be completely defined and clearly explained.

The next event on God's timetable will be the Rapture, or the coming of Christ for the saints, the saved. It is true that the English word *rapture* does not appear in the biblical text itself. The word derives from the Latin *raptare*, which means "to snatch away or to catch away." Regardless, *rapture* is an excellent word to capture the meaning of St. Paul's description of the great scene in which living believers will be *caught up* to be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). But those alive at that climactic moment will not precede those believers who have died prior to this event. Those believers shall be raised; that is, here will be a physical resurrection of the body from the dead — infused with the spirit that never dies — and the resurrected believers will lead the vanguard into the heavens above. Those living believers will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, with their glorified bodies following immediately behind them.

On the other hand, those who are not believers will be left behind, continuing with their day-to-day lives. The Lord Jesus makes this clear in His most extensive teaching concerning this often-queried subject. He indicates this stark truth in the words, "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:40–41; NKJV). The world as we know it will not end with the Rapture of the believers. There will be a great population left behind on planet Earth. The Church will be gone and the Holy Spirit will be gone in the sense that the Spirit dwelling in the believer, and the presence of

Christ amidst His people will cease to exist. The world will get exactly what it always wanted — the total absence of Jesus Christ and His people.

Thus, after the Rapture, there will begin a seven-year period that Jeremiah the prophet referred to as *the time of Jacob's trouble* (Jeremiah 30:7). Jesus described it by saying, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). This unprecedented period will last for seven years according to Daniel 9:24–27. Revelation 6:1–17 describes in detail the unleashing of horrible, unspeakable, unimaginable wrath on the God-forsaken planet. The world that rejected Christ will have the opportunity to live in a world without Him. Never could the imagination of depraved humanity conceive what will happen during that time.

In the very midst of this period will be the desecration of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15). The abomination of desolation will transpire (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–4). And the lost on earth will experience the full blast of these events.

But what will the saved in heaven be doing? These seven years shall be a time of evaluation of the saints based on the *quality* of their doctrine and life and service (1 Corinthians 3:11–17). This is the judgment of the *Bema* or the Judgment Seat of Christ. This will not be judgment for salvation or damnation. Rather it will be a judgment of the quality of Christian life, service, and doctrine. The result of the scrutiny will be the granting or the loss of rewards to believers based on that quality. While all hell, in a literal sense, is breaking loose in the Tribulation on earth below, the transported Christian will receive the appropriate reward in heaven.

At the end of that period will be the Second Coming of Christ, the coming of Christ with the saints (Matthew 24:29–

31; Revelation 19:11–21). This will not be the sudden, silent, selective removal of the Church. This will be the glorious, visible return of the risen and reigning Christ. This will be the warrior judge coming to claim what rightly belongs to Him. After the Battle of Armageddon, the victorious Christ will reign on earth for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1–6). The unbelievers who are alive at the return of Christ will be immediately sent to hell to await their final judgment (Matthew 25:41–46). The Tribulation saints, those who come to faith in Christ (Yeshua) during the Tribulation and are martyred, will immediately be transformed and join the returning army of saints in their glorified bodies. The innumerable multitude who come to faith during the Tribulation and manage to survive will join the host of the ages, enter the millennium in their physical bodies, and continue to procreate. At the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, there will be the final judgment of the unbelieving and spiritually lost. This will be a day of unimaginable despair in which the doomed and damned will be given their final sentence — endless torment in hell, forever separated from God and their loved ones. In the eternal state, the saved will spend eternity with God in heaven and the lost will spend eternity with Satan and his demons in the fire of hell. What a division of humanity this shall be!

### **Matthew 24:1–14**

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

<sup>3</sup>Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will

these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

<sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup>And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup>All these are the beginning of sorrows.

<sup>9</sup>“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. <sup>10</sup>And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup>Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But he who endures to the end shall be saved. <sup>14</sup>And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (NKJV).



What is hell? Hell is oneself.  
Hell is alone, the other figures in it  
Merely projections.  
There is nothing to escape from  
And nothing to escape to.  
One is always alone.

— T.S. ELIOT  
*The Cocktail Party*



# 1 the reality of mortality

As Queen Elizabeth lay dying, surrounded by the splendor of her palace, she reportedly uttered the famous words, “My kingdom for an inch of time.” The most powerful woman in the world could not stop the falling shadow of death. George Burns was already booked to perform in Las Vegas on his 100th birthday, but he could not stop an earlier appointment with mortality. Young and handsome John F. Kennedy Jr. and his beautiful wife had the same date. Revered football legend Tom Landry, who seemed immortal, could not stop the moment. The day he died, the beloved cartoonist of Peanuts fame, Charles Schultz, also died. None could stop the reality of mortality. Each and every January, the list is published to remind us of the deaths of the famous and infamous who died in the previous 12 months. While normally rather lengthy, the list, published by *Us Weekly* magazine, usually includes only those with recognizable names. The year 2013 saw the deaths of celebrities such as actors Cory Monteith and James Gandolfini, film critic Roger Ebert, and swimmer Ester Williams, to name a few. The year 2014 has already seen the likes of actors Philip Seymour Hoffman, Shirley

Temple, Robin Williams, Lauren Bacall, former Reagan White House Press Secretary James Brady, and others. Here's the point: we all die!

Our youth-and fitness-obsessed culture remains intoxicated with the allure of life that will not end. Even though there are more centenarians alive today than ever before, they too face mortality.

We are temporary. We are transient. Every grave marker in every cemetery on this planet is a witness to that reality. Go to the cemetery. Look at a granite marker. Visualize the inescapable fact that someday your name will be on a stone just like that, with a date of birth and a date of death. Unless you happen to live in the generation that witnesses the Rapture of the Church, you will leave this planet by the same route as everyone else (with the exception of Enoch and Elijah). Enoch walked with God and was raptured away into heaven without ever having faced physical death (Genesis 5:24). Elijah was caught up in a fiery chariot and likewise skipped death (2 Kings 2:11). I have never known anyone who has had these kinds of experiences, have you?

Thanks to Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, the end of the 20th century witnessed a fatal attraction to a famous shipwreck that occurred at the beginning of the century — the sinking of the *Titanic*. The world riveted its attention on the loss of a ship with more than 1,500 fatalities in the early morning hours of April 15, 1912, in the icy waters of the Atlantic. One young person wearing a T-shirt at O'Hare airport in Chicago captured the truth of the matter. The T-shirt read, "The ship sank; get over it." In fact, we are all on the *Titanic*. It is called planet Earth. Nobody journeys forever.

One of the earliest to write on this subject, Viktor Frankl, an Austrian-born neurologist and psychiatrist as well as Holocaust survivor, mused that no man can really contemplate his own death. That may indeed be the case, but is it that man can-

not or that man will not? Man's ultimate destiny is to die. Arnold Toynbee, the philosopher and historian, put it this way:

Man alone . . . has foreknowledge of his coming death . . . and, possessing this foreknowledge, has a chance, if he chooses to take it, of pondering over the strangeness of his destiny. . . . He has at least a possibility of coping with it, since he is endowed with the capacity to think about it in advance and . . . to face it and to deal with it in some way that is worthy of human dignity.<sup>1</sup>

Daily we are reminded in numerous ways of the often sudden and unexpected reality of death as we view wars, acts of terrorism, and violence in our cities, our nations, and our world. We know it is real, we know it exists, yet we just cannot seem to come to terms with it. In our Internet, cell phone, fax machine, voice mail, overnight delivery, fast-track society, death seems to be an unpleasant interruption of the action. Yet no new technology has changed the old reality. Everybody dies. Each of us has a date with death. Some place their hope in cloning to preserve them forever. Others believe in cryogenics and have their mortal remains frozen until the day a cure will be found for their cause of death. Some actually believe that brains will be transplanted in the skulls of volunteers who will take on the old brain of a very rich person.

John D. Rockefeller Sr. built the greatest fortune in American history until that of Bill Gates, whose wealth has now been surpassed by that of Mark Zuckerberg of *Facebook* fame. Rockefeller was the founder and power behind Standard Oil. He and his son spent a large portion of their lives trying to give away all of the money Rockefeller Sr. had made. As the richest man on the planet, Rockefeller had a single obsession: he wanted to

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1. Arnold Toynbee, "Traditional Attitudes Towards Death," in *Man's Concern With Death*, ed. Arnold Toynbee et al. (New York: McGraw, 1968), p. 63.

stay alive. As such, he founded hospitals and advanced research centers for the study of longevity. He meticulously studied the latest research on long life. He wanted to live to be a hundred, but he died just short of that mark. The richest man in the world, with all the resources to stave off the inevitable, could not stop it.

Every biography ends with an obituary. The pianist plays his last note. The carpenter hammers his final nail. The barber cuts his final head of hair. The homemaker washes her last dish. The athlete runs his final mile. The teacher utters her final lesson. Yet this generation, in a way unlike any other, lives with a blissful refusal to acknowledge this absolute reality: we are mortal.

I write these words to inform you of your mortality. You will die. But that will not be the end of you. Plants die and decompose. Animals die and their lives are gone forever. Human beings die and face another dimension of eternal existence. Ever since God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, every human who ever drew a breath on this planet lasts forever. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Hitler and Eva Braun, Elvis and John Lennon, and the entire roll call of humanity, both famous and obscure, will have a conscious existence forever.

So will you.

This book presents to you the two destinations that define the eternal existence of every individual who ever died. One destination holds inescapable horror and eternal retribution. The other is one of release, reward, rest, and reunion. There could not be a greater contrast between the two.

Harold Rhodes died and went to hell. His wife, Betty, died and went to heaven. Their son, Henry, an unbeliever like his father, lived through the Rapture and survived the Tribulation. Jesus then returned to earth to separate the saved from the unsaved. But when Henry stood before the Great White Throne Judgment, he (like his reprobate father) was sentenced to an

eternity in hell. Meanwhile, in heaven, Betty gathered around the throne of God with her daughter-in-law Helen.

This is not fiction. You will spend eternity either in heaven or in hell. You may make fun of this now, ridicule it, and try to forget it. But I can guarantee you one thing: you will think about it when you double over with a heart attack, your vision dims, and your breath goes away. If the doctor tells you that you have cancer and three months to live, you will think about this. If you have a peaceful deathbed and your family gathers around to watch you die, you will think of this. I would rather you consider me harsh now and thank God in eternity that you listened to me than to like me now and burn in hell forever. It is that straightforward.

You would do well to take this seriously. I have visited with businessmen on their deathbeds. Eternity is breathing down their necks. Their hearts weaken. Their breathing becomes shallow. Their palms are perspiring. Guess what? Not one of them has ever said, "I wish I could spend one more day at the office." None of them has ever pled for time to make one more deal. They are suddenly aware that they are about to step into eternity.

You should read this book with the same intensity with which you would read it if your physician just told you that you had six months to live. It can forever change your destiny and that of those around you.