

Lesson 19-20

The Doctrine of Heaven and Hell

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” Hebrews 9:27-28

I. What happens to people when they die?

- A. At death, the body of every man, woman and child goes to the grave to await a future resurrection (Gen. 3:19; Job 5:26-27). However, the spirit and soul (the eternal part) of man do not (II Pet. 1:13-14).

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return. Genesis 3:19

Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.
II Peter 1:13-14

The body is the tent that houses the soul and spirit or the invisible part of man.

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. –NIV

- B. At death, the spirit and soul of the believer go to be with Christ until the believer experiences the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6).

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

1. Stephen, the church's first martyr, called upon Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7:59).

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

2. Jesus told the repentant thief that he would be with Him that very day (Luke 23:43).

And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

3. Paul indicated that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:1-8).

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- C. At death, the spirit and soul of the unbeliever go to “Hades” (New Testament word) or “Sheol” (Old Testament word), which is the place of the dead, to await the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15).

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

II. Is there judgment after death?

YES! There is a judgment in relation to the believer, and there is a judgment in relation to the unbeliever.

- A. The judgment of the believer follows the first resurrection and is referred to as the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

1. This judgment involves believers only and does not deal with the issue of forgiven sin and the salvation of the believer (Eph. 1:7-8; Is. 43:25).

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence... Ephesians 1:7-8

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25

2. This judgment concerns the believer's faithfulness to all the will of God (Luke 12:42-48).

And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

3. This judgment concerns the believer's works of service rendered to Christ in this life (Mt. 16:27; I Cor. 3:12-15).

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Matthew 16:27

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. I Corinthians 3:12-15

4. This judgment is followed by corresponding rewards for a life lived for Christ (I Tim. 4:8; Rev. 11:18).

For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

I Timothy 4:8

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets

and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth. Revelation 11:18

5. Other related verses: Romans 14:8-12; I John 4:17; II Timothy 4:1

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:8-12

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. I John 4:17

Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.

–NLT

*And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus--who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom...
II Timothy 4:1*

- B. The judgment of the unbeliever follows the second resurrection and is referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

*Then I saw a **great white throne** and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

1. This judgment involves those whose names are not written in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:15).
2. This judgment will settle all accounts and render the wages of sin and the reward of iniquity (Acts 1:18; II Pet. 2:12-17).

12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count

it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. II Peter 2:12-17

III. Is heaven an actual place?

- A. Heaven is an actual place created by God (Gen. 2:1, 4; Deut. 10:14). Notice the use of the plural for “heavens” in the passage in Genesis.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished...This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens... Genesis 2:1, 4

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. Deuteronomy 10:14

- B. The word “heaven” is used to describe three places sometimes called the first, second and third heaven.

1. The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven that we see when we look up. Descriptions that apply to the first heaven include:

- Sky (Gen. 1:8; Mt. 16:3)

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; 3 and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.” Matthew 16:1-3

- Clouds (Dan. 7:13) “...the clouds of heaven.”
- Weather Phenomenon (Wind, Rain, Hail, Thunder, Lightning)
- Birds (Job. 35:11; Dan. 2:38)

Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven? Job 35:11

2. The second heaven is outer space that serves as the context for the planets and stars. Descriptions that apply to the second heaven include:

- Sun, Moon and Stars (Joel 2:10, 30-31)

The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. Joel 2:10

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

Joel 2:30-31

- Constellations (Is. 13:10)

For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.

3. The third heaven is a spiritual place called Paradise that serves as the dwelling place or throne room of God. Descriptions and characteristics that apply to the third heaven include:

- The Third Heaven (II Cor. 12:1-4)

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

- Paradise of God (Luke 23:43; II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Revelation 2:7

- Heavenly Eden or Garden of God (Ezek. 28:13)

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering...

- His Sanctuary (Ps. 102:19)

For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth...

- The Presence of God (Heb. 9:24)

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us...

- Heaven of Heavens (I Kgs. 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 68:33)

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!

I Kings 8:27

To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens... Psalm 68:33

- The Throne of God (Is. 66:1; Mt. 5:34; Rev. 4:2)

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool."

Isaiah 66:1

IV. What is heaven going to be like?

Heaven is an indescribably wonderful place that was created by God for His enjoyment with His creation.

- A. It is a place of God's dwelling (II Chr. 6:30). God is referred to as the God of heaven (II Chr. 36:23; Ezra 1:2; Jonah 1:9).

...then hear from heaven Your dwelling place... II Chronicles 6:30

So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Jonah 1:9

- B. It is a place of enjoyment (Rev. 22:1-5).

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

1. No sin, sickness, disease or death (Rev. 21:4, 27).

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

2. No tears, pain or suffering (Rev. 21:4).

- C. It is a place of rejoicing in God's presence (Rev. 14:1-5).

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. Revelation 14:2-3

- D. It is a place of enjoying fulfilled promises (Rev. 22:5).

V. Is there a literal hell?

YES! Hell is a literal place that was prepared for Satan and his fallen angels but will also become an eternal place of judgment for all those who follow Satan's pernicious ways (Mt. 10:28; 18:9; 23:33).

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.
Matthew 18:9

Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?
Matthew 23:33

VI. What will hell be like?

Hell is an indescribably vile place, totally void of God's presence.

A. Hell is a place of torment (Luke 16:23; Rev. 14:9-11).

And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Luke 16:23

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." Revelation 14:9-11

1. It is a place of full consciousness (Luke 16:19-31).
2. It is a place where the fire of desires, lusts and appetites are never quenched (Mark 9:43-48).

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where "Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."

Mark 9:43-44

3. It is a place of wicked companions (Mt. 23:14-15, 33; I Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 21:8). It is a place where hypocrites, serpents and vipers dwell.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. I Corinthians 6:9-10

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Revelation 21:8

4. It is a place of groaning, weeping and wailing (Mt. 13:41-42, 49-50).

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:41-42

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:49-50

5. It is a place of fire and brimstone (Mt. 25:41; Mark 9:43-49).

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels..."

Matthew 25:41

6. It is a place of everlasting shame and contempt (Dan. 12:2).

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

- D. Hell is eternal (Dan. 12:2; Mt. 25:46; Jude 7; Rev. 20:10).

...everlasting punishment... Matthew 25:46

...eternal fire... Jude 7

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10

VII. What makes our life on earth and the decisions that we make so important?

- A. Because death is final (Heb. 9:27).

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...

- B. Because after death there are no second chances (Luke 16:19-31; Eccl. 11:3; Ezek. 18:19-32).

- C. Because our eternal destiny is determined on the basis of what we do in and with this life (I Cor. 3:10-15).

- D. Because heaven and hell are eternal states (Rev. 20:10; 22:5).