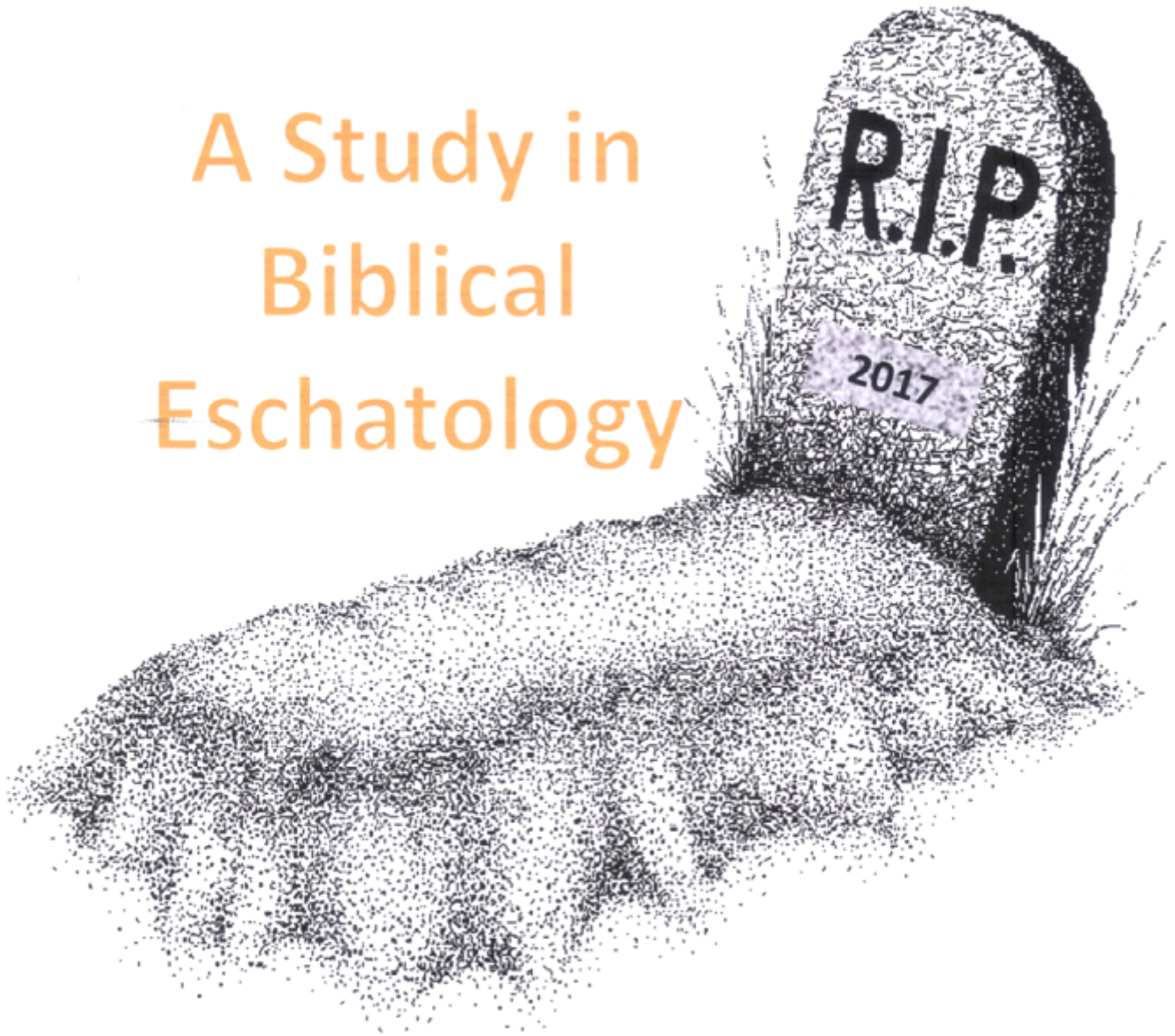


THE AFTERLIFE

A Study in Biblical Eschatology



The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Adult Bible Class Sunday Morning – Winter Quarter 2017

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An Appointment With Death

One man was so old he used to get up early every morning and check the obits just to make sure he was not dead. Alfred Nobel's name appeared in obits one day. In the 1867 Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel awoke one morning to read his own obituary in the local paper: "Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before. He died a very rich man." Actually, it was Alfred's older brother who had died. A newspaper reporter had made a mistake. But the account had a profound effect on Alfred. He decided he wanted to be known for something other than developing a means to kill people efficiently and amassing a fortune in the process. So Nobel initiated the Nobel Prize. He said, "Every man ought to have a chance to correct his epitaph (or obituary) in midstream and write a new one."

What Is Death?

Death originated with sin. Before Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit there was no death. Paul wrote, *"therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"* (Rom. 5:12). *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). Why die? *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23).

Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body is the tent or housing of the soul. The real person is not just the flesh and blood seen in this physical realm. For example, a walnut is composed of a shell and inside the nut. The real walnut is inside the shell. However, when you remove the nut from the shell it does not produce death. Death is defined by the Bible by Solomon, *"then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it"* (Eccl. 12:7). James says that we have dead faith when it is separate from works, as the body is dead separated from the spirit. *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:26).

Death always means a separation in scripture, not annihilation. The Bible does use death in a metaphorical sense. The prodigal son's father said his son was dead, meaning that they were separated (Lk. 15:24). Although the son was still very much alive. Paul says Christians are dead to the old law meaning that they are separated from it (Rom. 7:4-6).

When Solomon says that the body returns to the dust from which God made man, but his soul returns to God (Eccl. 12:7), it implies the soul lives on after its separation from the body in death. Job asked, *"if a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes"* (Job 14:14). Later he answers his own question, *"for I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"* (Job 19:25-27). It was this hope in death that kept Job alive. Yet Satan wishes man to believe there is no life after death.

Certainty of Death

One day a merchant sent his servant to the market. To his horror he met Death. He was so startled he ran home and asked his boss for the fastest horse to go to Samarra. The merchant goes to market. Upon seeing Death the merchant asks him why he had frightened his servant earlier in the day. Death said, "I was the one who was so startled when I saw your servant here in Bagdad - I have an appointment with him this afternoon in Samarra."

Death is unavoidable. We all have an appointment with death. *"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Heb 9:27). God has only pointed us toward one death. We only suffer

the second death which is eternal punishment by our own choice.

The certainty of death is on every corner and billboard warning us as sojourners that death is ahead. We hear it in sermons. A little engine trouble on an airplane can awaken more souls to their need for God and being prepared for death than any sermon. We read about it in the newspaper and hear about it on the radio, TV, from others in their conversations. We are reminded by funeral processions, and cemeteries we pass by. Life insurance agents make it their business to remind us of death. As the years fly by the calendar and the mirror reminds us of the coming appointment with death. A sense of our own mortality overwhelms us when someone close suddenly dies before our eyes. The statistics on death are solid and startling: 100 out of every 100 Americans now living will die. This country and every other nation throughout history has suffered a 100% mortality rate. Let's face it not one of us is going to get out of life alive.

Suppose these words, told to King Hezekiah, were spoken to you. *"In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live'"* (2 Kings 20:1). God heard his prayer and sent Isaiah back to tell the King God gave him fifteen more years of life. Hezekiah could beg for 15 more years of life, but he could not escape from death, yet we will not.

What Death Means to the Unfaithful

Fear

According to the Houston Chronicle a woman who favors liberal abortion laws backs her stand on her fear of death. "I feel that it is the greatest tragedy that will ever be endured that I should die. I wish not to have been born so that I might escape dying. I wish my parents had been able to prevent my birth, as was their desire at the time, to save me from the terror of eternal death. I consider it unforgivably immoral for human beings to bring children into the world to die. If the human race ended, at least death would be abolished. ...I love children too much to bring them into the world to die. This is a valid moral position, and the state must grant me the freedom to exercise this option if need should ever arise." The last thing a man wants to do is the last things he does. God's wish for man is that he be released from the fear of death. In fact, God sent His Son to remove this fear. *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Heb. 2:14-15).

The Certainty of a Second Death

Everyone dies once but the unsaved dies twice. *"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"* (Rev. 21:8).

Divine Vengeance and Punishment

Hell awaits the ignorant and disobedient. *"...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"* (2 Th. 1:7-9). Every man must do two things alone: die and believe.

Something Worse for Backsliding Christians

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'" (2 Pet. 2:20-22). It is a terrible thing for any man or woman to die without Christ. However, it is worse for a Christian to be lowered into a Christless grave. They have too much of Christ to love the world, and too much of the world to love Christ.

Consider for a moment what some sinners have said on their death bed. Voltaire, the famous infidel who spent most of his life fighting Christianity, cried out with his dying breath, "I am abandoned by

God and man; I shall go to hell!" Charles IX, King of France: "What blood, what murders, what evil councils I have followed. I am lost! I see it well?" Hobbes, the atheist: "I am taking a fearful leap in the dark!" Edward Gibbon, Author of "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", "All is dark and doubtful!" Elizabeth the I, Queen of England, reclining upon a couch, with 10,000 dresses in her wardrobe, a kingdom on which the sun never sets at her feet, all now are valueless; "Millions of money for an inch of time!"

What Does the Death of a Saint Mean?

A Saint's Death is Gain

Paul was not afraid to die. He wrote, *"for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). An English proverb states, "he who fears death lives not." Those most prepared to die are those who are most prepared to live.

There was a very cautious man
Who never laughed or played.
He never risked, he never tired
He never sang or prayed.
And when one day he passed away
His insurance was denied
For since he never really lived
They claimed he never died.

A Saint's Death is Precious

Just how does God view the death of a saint? *"Precious in the sight of the Lord, Is the death of His saints"* (Ps. 116:15).

Saint's Will Die The Death Of The Righteous

Balaam said, *"who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"* (Num. 23:10). To die the death of the righteous, one must live a righteous life. One must obey God's righteousness (Acts. 10:35; Rom. 1:16,17).

For the Saint Death is a Blessing

The book of Revelation has seven beatitudes. One of these is called the "Beatitude of the Dead". *"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'"* (Rev. 14:13). The source of this statement is *"a voice from heaven."* The dead are in a state of happiness. *"Blessed are"* can be translated "happy are". They are not in a state of pain or grief. This scripture implies the righteous dead are in a state of conscious existence. The exception to this beatitude is that all who die are not happy. This blessing only applies to those who *"die in the Lord."* The faithful saints are those who rest from labors shows that some work was done. This represents the very nature of their blessedness. And their *"works follow with them."* They have a perpetual influence in the world. Like Abel *"though being dead, yet speaks"* (Heb. 11:5). They have treasures laid up in heaven.

Death is a Departure

Paul often speaks of his death as if it were a vehicle by which one leaves this earth. *"For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"* (Phil. 1:23).

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6). "To the unbeliever, death is the end; to the believer, the beginning."

Death is a Sleep

Both at the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and Lazarus, Jesus calls death a sleep (Jn. 11:11). Paul comforted the saints at Thessalonica when he wrote, *"but I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope"* 1Th. 4:13). Death is a comforting and secure for the saints as a child falling asleep in his father's arms.

Death is like the Pulling off a Garment

"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. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 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" (2 Cor. 5:1-4; also see 2 Pet. 1:14).

Conclusion

Are you ready to die? Keep in mind there will be no sermons at the cemetery and not more invitations will be given. As Paul *"reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come"* the Roman governor *"Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you'"* (Acts 24:35). Do not be like King Agrippa who told Paul *"you almost persuade me to become a Christian"* (Acts 26:28). Remember 2017 could be chisled on your tombstone.

What if this day was to be your last day alive on earth? Would you act in fear and terror or calm with courage and a smile on your face. Would you argue with your spouse or show your love a little more often? Would you live it up and party or come to Sunday night worship? Would you regret your failure to come to Bible Study this morning? To die in Christ demands that we first live in Christ. *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27).

The Boy Scout's motto is: Always be prepared. Ten year old Kevin remarked, "I'm not afraid to die I'm a Boy Scout". Paul was not a Boy Scout but he was prepared for death. *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Questions:

1. Why do men die?
2. How does the Bible define death?
3. T F Death always means a separation in scripture, not annihilation.
4. How certain is death?
5. Should Christians fear death? Explain.
6. What is the second death?
7. Explain how a man's eternal destiny is sealed at the point of death.

8. Explain why death will be worse for the impenitent backsliding Christian?
9. What does death mean to the saint?
10. How does God view the death of a saint?

Application & Discussion:

1. How could the certainty or inevitability of death for each man and woman be used in converting the lost?
2. Death could happen for any Christian any time. How can one be prepared for death?

Homework: Read today's obituaries.

Hades: Realm of the Dead

Funerals bring a mixed bag of emotions. Mostly we miss our loved one, husband/wife, father/mother, brother/sister, grandfather/grandmother, friend, neighbor, and fellow brother or sister in Christ. Another emotion, known as fear, results from facing the reality of our own mortality. We too, will one day leave this world. One of the greatest fears of man is: DEATH. It is the great fear of the unknown. What will happen? Will it hurt? Who will we meet? Will we remember anything? Will we cease to exist? If someone could only come back from the dead and tell us about their experience, maybe they could answer these questions for us. Jesus in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus tells that there is no going back. The rich man in death called out to Abraham *"I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him [Lazarus] to my father's house"* (Lk. 16:27). Abraham would not because the living had all the information through the Bible they needed in order to make it through death into life eternal. However, Jesus parable does give us some insight as to what goes on after death.

Where Does the Soul Go After Death?

First, the dead's disembodied spirit does not just enter the grave. As noted in the previous lesson the soul is separated from the body in death (James 2:26). The body decays back into dirt while the soul goes to God from whence it came (Eccl. 12:7). The soul is the part of man that flies away at the moment of death (Ps. 90:10). When Christ died on the cross it is said He gave up the ghost or His spirit (Luke 23:46). When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, her spirit had to return in order for her to return to life.

Second, the human spirit does not go directly to Heaven or into Hell. Some believe the soul does go directly to Heaven or Hell based on several passages. As the Pharisees were stoning Stephen to death, *"he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'"* (Acts 7:59). Still others point to Paul's desire *"to depart and to be with Christ"* (Phil. 1:23) as proof. After all both God and Christ are in Heaven, so they believed at death they were going to go be with them in Heaven. However, God or Christ are physical being who are bound by space and time. Heaven is a spiritual realm. This is why both Philip and Paul and all Christians can be in Christ and Christ be with them while they were on earth. Perhaps, being with God and Christ is a matter of degrees.

Finally, the soul departs to the realm of the dead upon death. When Jesus was dying on the cross he said to him, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43). After three days Jesus' soul was reunited with His body on earth and He resurrected from the dead. On the Sunday morning Jesus met Mary Magdalene and told her, *"Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'"* (John 20:17). The fact is, Jesus died and went to paradise. He resurrected to life on earth. Forty days later He would ascend into heaven to be with the Father (Acts 1:9-11).

Note that the King James states in Acts 2:31 that Jesus was in Hell. This is a poor translation. The word here is *hades*. The New King James reads: *"...concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God..."* (Acts 2:31-33).

Definition of "Hades"

According to Greek mythology Hades was the god of the underworld while his brother Poseidon was the god of the sea and Zeus the chief of the gods. The Greek term *hades* is found several times in the New Testament. When a translation does not transliterate the word from Greek letters into English (Hades) it translates it either "grave" or "hell" or "the pit." The term for eternal hell is *gehenna* not *hades*.

"Hades...the realm of the dead.. The common receptacle of disembodied spirits" (Thayer 11). "The region of departed spirits...probable derivation is from "hado", signifying all-receiving" (Vine 517). Hades is therefore the intermediate state or realm of all the dead both good and evil who await judgment day and their final reward or punishment.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew term *sheol* was the counter part to the Greek word *hades*. It is found some sixty-five times in the Old Testament.

Divisions of the Hadean Realm

Paradise

While upon the cross Jesus promised to be with the thief in paradise (Luke 23:43). It corresponds to "*Abraham's Bosom*" in Jesus Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:22). Only those who die the death of the righteous can expect to be conducted to this part of Hades. All the saints of all the ages from Enoch to yesterdays brother or sister in Christ will be there.

Tartarus

When the richman died he awoke from death to find himself in a place of torment (Luke 16:23). The term *tartarus* is found only once in the New Testament. "*For if God didn't spare the angels who sinned but threw them down into Tartarus and delivered them to be kept in chains of darkness until judgment*" (2 Peter 2:4, Holman Christian Standard Bible). The word means prison. This is where evil angels are being held by God. It is that part of Hades where the wicked await formal judgment. All the sinners of all the ages from the flood to Ahab to Judas to the millions who die every year without the Lord are imprisoned.

Great Gulf

When the rich man saw Lazarus comforted by Abraham "*he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'* But Abraham said, '*Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us*'" (Luke 16:24-26).

Life on earth determines upon death where one's soul will be sent by God. The righteous will be sent to Paradise or Abraham's Bosom. While the wicked will be imprisoned in Tartarus. Due to the Great Gulf no one in Paradise can cross over to Tartarus and no one in Tartarus can go to Paradise. No one is found in the Great Gulf. It is no man's land.

The Souls Status in the Hadean Realm

Angelic Escort for the Righteous

It is comforting to note that when Lazarus died he "*was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom*" (Luke 16:22).

Wicked Awaken in Tartarus

In contrast to Lazarus' angelic escort the scripture says, "*the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes*" (Luke 16:22b,23a). Talk about a rude awakening.

Comfort for Those in Paradise

"*So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom...now he is comforted*" (Lk. 16:22,25). Part of the comfort is knowing Abraham and being comforted by him. Even though Lazarus never met Abraham in life and had not family photos of him, he is recognized and recognizes.

Furthermore, being in Paradise assures one of being comforted by God and Christ who are in Heaven. In what is known as the Shepherd's Psalm God promises to be with us. Psalm 23:4 says, "*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with Me.*" Paul, the apostle, when contemplating death while in prison said that he had mixed feelings about dying or living. He explains the reason for his dilemma, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain*

in the flesh is more needful for you” (Phil. 1:21-24).

Wicked Tormented in Tartarus

It is further said concerning the rich man: *“In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment,...in agony in this flame.”* (Luke 16:23,24).

In Greek mythology, Tartarus was known as the land of the dead where they were often tormented. Sisyphus, King of Corinth, was condemned to toll a huge rock up a hill, but as he reached the top it would roll back again. Sisyphus had to repeat this day after day. Tantalus (from which we derived the English term “tantalize”) was condemned to stand in a stream of crystal clear spring water which receded as he bent to drink it and the tree branches full of ripe fruit would pull up out of reach when ever he reached for something to eat.

Both Had Their Reasoning Abilities

They could hear, speak, see, feel comfort, feel pain, reason. The rich man could remember the former life and that he had five brothers in danger or coming to Tartarus.

No Returning to Life

All those raised back to life from the dead were either righteous or innocent children. Elijah and Elisha raised innocent boys from the dead. Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain and the daughter of Jairus. Jesus raised righteous Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus died, the dead saints arose from the dead (Matt. 27:52). Samuel returned from death to prophecy to King Saul of his pending doom. No evidence exist that nay spirit ever returned from Tartarus, only those of man whose body touched the bones of Elisha.

The End of the Hadean Realm

In John’s Revelation he sees the resurrected Jesus who claims, *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death”* (Rev. 1:8). Before Christ’s resurrection there was no hope of resurrecting to life eternal. Christ arose victorious over death and the realm of the dead: Hades. Paul therefore asks, *“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”* (1 Cor. 15:55).

John Revelation goes on to depict Christ victory over Satan when He comes again. After which *“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”* (Rev. 20:13). With all the dead resurrected for judgment there is not more death or need for a realm of the dead. *“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”* (Rev. 20:14).

Conclusion

Death is not the end of it all. Hades, the abode of the dead, is prepared to hold both the good and evil of this world until judgment day. Although eternal punishment or reward has not been handed down by God at the Day of Judgment, yet there is a sense in which one’s destiny is sealed at the time of death. Paradise as a reward and blessing for the righteous and innocent. Tartarus as a punishment for the wicked. Where will you await final Judgment?

Questions:

1. While do some believe the soul of man goes directly upon death to either heaven or hell?
2. Explain why Peter said Christ was not left in Hell in the Acts 2 according to the King James Version.
3. Where did Christ say he would be on the day of His death?

4. What is the equivalent to the Greek hades in the Hebrew Bible?
5. What corresponds to paradise in Jesus parable of the rich man and Lazarus?
6. What is tartarus?
7. Why can't any cross over from paradise to tartarus or vice versa?
8. Describe what tartarus is like?
9. Describe what paradise will be like?
10. What will happen to Hades?

Application & Discussion:

1. How does knowing about the Hadean realm bring you comfort?
2. How does the information about Hades dispel the modern accounts of those who claim to have returned from Heaven or Hell?

Homework: Make a list of all those according to the Bible we know are currently in Paradise.

Second Coming

Growing up in the country outside of a small town of several hundred people in Ohio did not afford much excitement. However, one night the owner of a home near the elementary school came home drunk. Obviously, he did not pay attention to the strong smell of gas that had leaked out of his stove and filled his house. When he opened the door the gas ignited and the explosion with the accompanying ball of fire was seen, felt and heard for miles around.

Across the street from the school was the church where I had attended until I was twenty years old. Next to the church was a home rented by the young, single preacher. The explosion violently shook his little house. He leapt out of bed at the sound of the thunderous explosion. Blinded by the ball of fire and still half asleep he thought it was the Second Coming and the Lord come and gone with the saints and left him behind. He was on his hands and knees praying fervently to God when he heard the sound of sirens and the muttering of the gathering crowd. He arose from his supplications to see what was going on. Soon he realized that this was not the Day of the Lord.

The most common word for the return of Christ is from the Greek word *parousia* meaning “appearing.” It is used among secular writings to refer to a visit by royalty. In fact, the King of kings will one day return for His Kingdom. Contrary to popular views He will not come to establish His Kingdom on earth but to gather His kingdom from the earth: both the living and the dead.

Paul speaks a great deal about the Second Coming in his epistle. In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, he gives some important deals to give comfort to the early saints (1 Thess. 4:13 - 5:5).

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 5:13-18)

Regard for the Dead Saints

Perhaps the Thessalonians falsely concluded that the brethren who had died were going to miss out on being with the Lord when He appeared. By saying they are “asleep” Paul pictures them in a condition of comfort and rest awaiting to be “awaken” when the Lord returns.

Relief from Sorrow and Hopelessness

The Thessalonians had been waiting for Christ to return and now some had died. Not only have they lost brothers and sisters these souls had not been able to see the promise fulfilled. This may have left them in a state hopelessness. Paul was writing about the appearing of Jesus “lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (4:13c). Christians are not to live without hope in regard to death. The Greeks thought that the grave may have not meant the end of one’s existence but it did not offer hope. The Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.

Resurrection of Jesus as Proof

Faith in the death and resurrection of Christ is essential for their hope. Paul wrote, “for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again” (4:14a). The miracle proved the Jesus can give hope over death. Furthermore, the fact that Jesus arose from the dead proves that there is a resurrection.

Restoring the Dead in Christ

"Even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ...that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep"(4:14b,15b). This means that God will raise the dead. Those who *"sleep in Jesus"* will not miss out at the appearing of Jesus. In fact, they will precede us in meeting the Lord. This also reassures the living saints the faithful dead are currently with God in a sense and will be brought with Him.

Resounding Shout, Voice, and Trumpet

No one is going to miss out on the Lord's appearing because three unique sounds will be involved in this event: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God"*(4:16a). What order these may occur or whether they occur simultaneously is anyone's guess. Yet the purpose of these three great sounds is that the appearing of the Lord will be unmistakable and unmissable.

The word *"shout"* is a commanding, loud word given by someone in authority, such as, an officer would give a soldiers or a charioteer commands to his horses. The purpose is to awaken from death. As Jesus resurrected Lazarus commanding, *"Lazarus, come forth"* (Jn. 11:43). My mother used to tell us children when we were playing to rowdy, *"Quite it down! You kids are being loud enough to wake the dead."* This of course was an exaggeration. But when the Lord shouts at His return those *"in the grave shall hear His voice"* (Jn. 5:28).

The next sound is that of *"the voice of an archangel."* Some believe like the Jews and the Muslims that there are several archangels. Perhaps Michael is the only archangel (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). Angels will be present with Christ when He appears (1 Thess. 1:7).

The third sound is *"the trumpet call of God."* When Moses gathered the people at Mount Sinai the trumpet sounded by God so great that all the Israelites trembled with fear (Ex 19:18-20). In the Roman Empire, trumpets were used to announce the arrival of a great person. Paul told the Corinthians that the bodily resurrection would take place when the last trumpet sounded. *"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (1 Cor. 15:51,52),

Raising the Dead First

Who is first in line at the appearance of the Lord. Paul said, *"the dead in Christ will rise first"* (4:16b). Instead of missing out, they are first in line. Not only will the living saints know that it is the appearing of the Lord by the three sounds, but they will see the dead in Christ be the first to rise and meet Him in the air.

Rapture of the Living Saints

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"(4:17a). In the Latin the word used for *"caught up"* is *rapu* which is the term from which the English word *"rapture"* is derived.

The reason for the living saints being caught up is to *"meet the Lord."* The term used for *"meet"* is the idea of meeting important persons and every royalty. Those living when Christ appears will meet and greet the arriving visitor.

The location of this meeting of the disciples with their Lord is *"in the clouds"* and *"in the air."* *"Clouds"* often represents the presence of deity in the Bible. *"Air"* is the space between earth and heaven.

Reunion for Eternity

Paul tells the Thessalonians of the outcome of this meeting with the Lord: *"And thus we shall always be with the Lord"*(4:17b). It will be an everlasting meeting. The end for the believer is an endless beginning with Christ. It will be one great big family reunion where no one will ever go home because every one is already home. Timelessness may be difficult for our finite minds to grasp. Time consists of past, present, and future, but eternity only consists of now.

Relieving Words of Comfort

The present blessing Paul hopes to bestow upon these Christians with this information: *"therefore comfort one another with these words"*(4:18). Paul expects them to spread the word and comfort each other. The term comfort is from the Greek *parakaleo* meaning *"to call one alongside."* It is used of the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised would come to the apostles after His ascension as the Comforter. It is

comforting to know that our brothers and sister who are asleep in Christ will be with God and the Lord and we will be reunited with them at the Second Coming. Furthermore, when He appears it will bring endless comfort. Paul would later write, *"we are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord"* (2 Cor. 5:8).

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thess. 5:1-3)

- **Unpredictable**

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you" (5:1). Why? Did they already know when Christ was to appear? In fact, there are no signs of the time of Christ's return. Jesus, Himself, said, *"but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"* (Matt. 24:36).

- **Unexpected**

Would it not be nice if thieves were kind enough to call ahead and make an appointment with their intended victims. That way they could be ready for them by leaving the door unlocked, making sure the house is clean, and having the police setting in the living room waiting for them. Just as a burglar does not announce his arrival ahead of time, Jesus will come when He is least expected. *"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night"* (5:2). Jesus said, *"but know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect"* (Matt. 24:43,44).

This *"day of the Lord"* is used throughout the Bible as an appointed time by God to bring judgment. However, in this context it refers to the Second Coming.

- **Unplanned**

Pax et securitas was a popular slogan of the imperial Roman propaganda machine. Paul uses the phrase here. It is what the unprepared saints might say in regard to the Lord's return. *"For when they say, 'Peace and safety!'"* (5:3a). The first century enjoyed an unprecedented peace in the Roman Empire. Historians refer to this period as the *Pax Romana*.

Often when things are calm and peaceable people will tend to let their guard down. In times of peace few are concerned with making plans for war. During the Deluge and in Sodom and Gomorrah people were eating, drinking, and marrying when suddenly the destructive judgment of God fell upon them (Lk. 17:26,27). False prophets like to leave people unprepared for the Day of Judgment by proclaiming false peace (Jer. 6:14; Ezek. 13:10). Since that Day will come according to God's plans Christians can carelessly get caught up in the things of the moment.

Consider for a moment if God would let everyone in on His timetable. So everyone knew exactly when Christ would appear. Sinners would wait till the last moment to be baptized to wash away their sins. Christians would forsake their duties and live like the world until the time was almost upon them. The fact that no one knows motivates all to seek God now.

- **Unpleasant**

Those who are unprepared for the Day will find that *"sudden destruction comes upon them"* (5:3b). In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, the phrase *"eternal destruction"* stands as the opposite of "eternal life." Those who are found to be disobedient to God will find themselves separated from God forever. It will come upon them so suddenly there will be no chance of them repenting and establishing a relationship with God. When the end comes there will be no reprieves, no second chances, no escape.

- **Uncertain**

A pregnant woman knows that her time will eventually come. No expectant mother knows the hour when a natural birth will begin. The Second Coming of Christ is *"as labor pains upon a pregnant woman"* (5:3c). When a woman is ready to give birth, she can't change her mind. Ready or not, the baby is coming. Because He has not come yet does not mean that the Lord will not come. Some false teachers

have taken advantage of delayed coming of the Lord. *"Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'"* (2 Peter 3:3,4).

- **Unavoidable**

When the Day does finally arrive Paul says *"they shall not escape"* (5:3d). After 120 years the rains finally came and only eight souls were saved on the ark. No one else escaped the flood. When fire and brimstone finally began to rain down on Sodom and the cities of the plain only Lot and his two virgin daughters were spare. No one else escaped. Knowing something is unavoidable should encourage a mature, reasonable person to prepare to face it.

when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. (2 Thess. 1:7b-10)

- **Divine Motive: Justice**

Paul informs us that the day will come for this retribution and rest *"when the Lord Jesus is revealed"* (1:7a). Three Greek terms are used in the New Testament to refer to the Second Coming of Christ: *parousia*, *epiphany*, and *apocalypsis*. Here Paul uses the term *apocalypsis* for *"revealing."* It will be the time of the revelation of Jesus to the whole world. When He was first revealed in the flesh the wicked judge Him worthy of death on the cross. When He comes again it will be He would judges them.

The Second Coming is described in three ways. 1) He will come from Heaven. He ascended to Heaven and will return from Heaven (Acts 1:8f). 2) He will come with His angels. 3) He will come in flaming fire. Fire is used with regard to God in various ways in the Bible. Here it can refer both to His glorious appearing and the means of punishment and destruction upon the wicked.

Two reasons are given for the revelation of Jesus: 1) to reward the disobedient with punishment and 2) reward the saints. The character of the wicked is described as being both ignorant of God and not obeying the Gospel. Some scholars have argued the Gentiles are the ones who *"do not know God"* while the unbelieving Jews are those who *"do not obey the gospel."* However, both Jews and Gentiles are shown to be both ignorant and disobedient in the New Testament. In fact, the two descriptions are not targeting different groups of sinners but describing two characteristics of all sinners. God is just in condemning them for their ignorance and disobedience.

The punishment of lost sinners will be banishment from God's presence. This will be for eternity. The word *"destruction"* does not mean annihilation. To annihilate something would be to destroy it to the point of nonexistence. Yet the *"destruction"* in the passage is modified with the word *"everlasting"* meaning *"endless duration."* Thus showing their existence will not end. The worse part of Hell is not the lake of fire, but the terminal nature of one's banishment from presence of God. In Hell God cannot be found. There will be no hope for the future, no chance to repent, no extension of His mercy, never a prospect He will bestow His grace upon them, and never again will they have an opportunity to enjoy His glory.

The same *"Day"* Jesus judges the wicked will be the same *"Day"* the saints are rewarded with their rest. Premillennialists will argue the saints will be given their rest in the rapture and the wicked will be punished after seven years of tribulation.

Two blessings will be given to the saints on that Day: 1) sharing in the glory of Jesus and 2) witnessing the admiration He receives. What a glorious Day it will be when all the saints are gathered to the Lord in the air. When they are crowned with victory by the King of kings Himself. Why are they so blessed? Because they believed the testimony of Jesus in the Gospel message. This perhaps refers to the day they obeyed the Gospel. The sinners did not believe or know Jesus as the Son of God and Lord. They did not obey the Gospel testified to them. Therefore, they in contrast with the saints will not share in the glory of Christ.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

- **Divine Motive for Delay**

God not only does not react to the passing of time like man, but He is not “slack” with regard to carrying out His promises. He will not delay forever. He will not loiter around in heaven without keeping His promises. God is never slow or tardy. He Lord has never been too early, or too late. He is always right on time.

God waits because God is love and sent His Son the first time because He so love the world. Now He still loves man and will send Christ back at the right time. God’s perfect justice is balanced with his perfect love. He is willing to save every single valuable soul which is worth more than all the world (Matt. 16:24). This will to save is not teaching universal salvation. God might want to see all repent, but God will not remove man’s free-will to chose to come to repentance.

Conclusion

How can we determine whether or not some tragic event is the Second Coming or just some random accident? *“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him”* (Rev 1:7). When He comes again everyone will know. His coming will be global and unmistakable. Keep in mind that when Christ comes again is not nearly as important as to whether or not you are ready for his return. Jesus went on to say, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:44).

Questions:

1. Match the terms with the event of the Second Coming.

a.	<i>parousia</i>	appearing
b.	sleep	dead in Jesus
c.	dead in Christ	first to raise
d.	Voice	of archangel
e.	Trumpet	of God
f.	rapture	from the Latin for “caught up”
2. When Christ comes again the living saints will meet the Lord
 - a. In the air
 - b. In the clouds
 - c. After the dead in Christ arise
 - d. All the above
3. How long will the saints, both living and dead, be with the Lord after the “rapture”?
4. What is the end result of this revelation concerning Christ’s appearance?

5. How is the Day of the Lord like a pregnant woman?
4. Show from this passage that no one will have a second chance to escape the wrath of the Day of the Lord.
5. What two reasons are given in 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10 for the revelation of Jesus?
6. What two blessings will be given to the saints on that Day?
7. According to 2 Peter 3:9 what is God's motive for delaying His return?

Application and Discussion:

1. How can Paul's information about Christ's return be used to comfort saints today?
2. How does the scriptural information in this lesson contradict the modern doctrines of premillennialism?

Homework: Where ever you go and what ever you are doing this coming week have a conscious awareness that Christ could return at any moment.

Resurrection from the Dead

One of the main events and subjects of the New Testament is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the subsequent hope of a personal resurrection to life by the saints. There is no mention of the word “resurrection” until the New Testament. What does the Old Testament teach about the resurrection?

The concept of resurrection is stressed throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Not only did Jesus predict His resurrection, the Old Testament also points to the resurrection. *“Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”* (Luke 24:25-27). *“And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”* (1 Cor. 15:4).

Evidence of the teaching and belief of the resurrection in the Old Testament. Although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead, they were still spoken of by God as in existence years later. *“Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God”* (Ex. 3:6). God is regularly described as being the God of People who have died. *“But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him”* (Lk. 20:37,38).

Because of the deadness of Sarah’s womb and Abraham’s loins, the very birth of Isaac paralleled resurrection according to Paul: *“(as it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations’ in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did”* (Rom. 4:17). When God tested the faith of Abraham by asking him to sacrifice him on a mountain, Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead after the sacrifice. Note the faith of Abraham when he told his servants that he and the boy would return (Gen. 22:5). *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense”* (Heb. 11:17-19). This event foreshadowed Christ’s resurrection. Jesus died at the hand of his own Father but was resurrected from the dead.

Moses died on Mount Nebo and was buried by God (Dt. 34:5,6), centuries later he appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration in bodily form (Mk. 9:4). This implies the resurrection.

When God gave Hannah her son Samuel, she praised Him in song part of which reads: *“The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up”* (1 Sam. 2:6).

As a consequence of his sin with Bathsheba, David was to suffer the death of their son. He fasted and prayed for days to ask God to spare the child’s life. When the child died he got up, washed, and ate. He explained his sudden one eighty degree turn in behavior and attitude to a servant: *“but now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”* (2 Sam. 12:23).

Both the prophets Elijah and Elisha raised a boy for the dead (2 Kings 13:20-21).

The Old Testament mentions the dead being in Sheol which is also referred to as the grave. But this idea of a grave is a place where the souls are conscious. *Sheol* is equivalent to the New Testament Hades: the realm of the dead. The Psalms speaks of the hope of life after shed. *“O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit”* (Ps. 30:3). *“O Our God is the God of salvation; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death”* (Ps. 68:20). Psalm 16:10,11 is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:31 and by Paul in Acts 13:35-37 as a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. David expressed his hope of life beyond death. *“Surely goodness*

and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever” (Ps. 23:6). “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me” (Ps. 49:15). “Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Ps. 103:4).

Job said, *“So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, They will not awake Nor be roused from their sleep. “Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait” (Job 14:12-14). Later Job answers his own question, “for I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job. 19:25-27).*

Solomon explains that at death the body and spirit are separated and implies man’s spirit survives death. *“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them”:...Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:1,7).*

Jonah’s experience of three days in the belly of a great sea creature foreshadowed the very resurrection of Christ. Jesus said, *“for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40).*

Many of the prophets mentioned the idea of a resurrection in their prophecies (Is. 25:7-9; 26:19; 53:10,11; Hosea 13:14; Ezek. 37:12-14). Daniel contains the most obvious description of a hope in the bodily resurrection. *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).*

The Old Testament saints clearly had enough evidence to have a hope in the resurrection. In Jesus Day many of the Jews believed in the resurrection. However, the Sadducees were a sect of the Jews who did not. *“For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both” (Acts 23:8).*

One warm spring afternoon, a Bible class teacher gave a large plastic egg to each of her students. Then she sent them outside to find signs of life and put them inside their egg. Soon they returned. In one was a butterfly. In another was an ant. Others contained flowers, twigs, blades of grass. But one egg had nothing in it. Everyone knew whose it was--it belonged to a boy with Down's syndrome. Some of the kids laughed at him. The teacher asked him why he had not put any signs of life in his egg. He said quietly, *“Because the tomb was empty”*. Shortly thereafter he died and at his funeral on the nine children from his class came up and laid an empty egg on his coffin.

Yes, the greatest sign of life and hope for life beyond death is the empty tomb.

The apostle Paul dedicated an entire chapter to the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15). In part, he did so because of the brethren at Corinth were denying the resurrection. Paul asked, *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v. 12).* Even today there are some who will vehemently deny the resurrection. In a cemetery in Hanover, Germany, is a grave on which were placed huge slabs of granite and marble cemented together and fastened with heavy steel clasps. It belongs to a woman who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Yet strangely, she directed in her will that her grave be made so secure that if there were a resurrection, it could not reach her. On the marker were inscribed these words: *“This burial place must never be opened.”* In time, a seed, covered over by the stones, began to grow. Slowly it pushed its way through the soil and out from beneath them. As the trunk enlarged, the great slabs were gradually shifted so that the steel clasps were wrenched from their sockets. A tiny seed had become a tree that had pushed aside the stones.

Why is the resurrection so crucial to the Gospel message? It is the centerpiece of Christianity because Jesus did not just die and was buried, but he arose (15:1-3). The resurrection stands as the strongest proof of Christ deity. This is why Paul made it a point to list those who are witnesses of the resurrected Christ. The risen Savior was seen by about 500 brethren at one time (15:6), by James (15:7), by all of the apostles (15:7) and finally by Paul himself (15:8).

Paul's main line of argumentation in support of the resurrection is a list of the serious consequences that befall all if there is not resurrection. If there is no resurrection from the dead than...

- Christ is not risen from the dead (12-13).
- The apostles' preaching and the Corinthians' faith is vain (14)
- The apostles are false witnesses (15-16)
- They are still in their sins (17)
- Those who have died in Christ have perished (18)
- Those who hope in Christ are the most pitiable of all men (19)

General Wellington commanded forces at Waterloo. When the battle was over, he spelled out by code, "Wellington defeated...", yet fog set in, and people only saw news of "defeat." The fog cleared and the message continued. "Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo." People looked at the death of Christ and said "defeat." Yet, at the Resurrection, God's message was finished. The resurrection spelled victory.

Next, Paul moves on to explain the nature of the bodily resurrection all the saints can anticipate when Christ comes again. We will have incorruptible bodies (15:42), glorious bodies (15:43), powerful bodies (15:43), and spiritual bodies (15:44). Although some may wonder today: "What about those who were cremated or devoured by wild beasts?" Think about it, if God is powerful enough to create the universe from nothing and man from the dust of the ground and a woman from a rib, surely He is able to restore a body. Furthermore, the body in the resurrection is not the same as the fleshly body.

The story is told of an assistant of the great chemist, Faraday. One day he knocked a little silver cup into a jar of acid. It disappeared, being eaten by the acid. The great chemist came in and put some chemical into the jar, and in a moment every particle of silver precipitated to the bottom. He sifted it out as a shapeless mass, sent it to a silversmith, and the cup was restored, shining brighter than before. If Faraday could precipitate that silver and recover his cup, I believe God can restore my sleeping and scattered dust.) Remember, the miracles of God are greater than the feats of men.

What gives us hope for this glorious resurrection? Believe it or not it is death. Paul argues in verses 54-58 that our hope come through death. Athens in Paul's day had a monument which read, "Once a man dies and the earth drinks up his blood, there is no resurrection". Paul had preached about the resurrection on Mars' Hill and some scoffed (Ac. 17). One of the most common epitaphs on Greek graves was "NO HOPE". Eternity is described by Shakespeare as "that undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveler returns." Yet through the death of Christ we all can have hope in the resurrection through Christ's triumph over death Christians have a different view of death.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. (Phil. 1:21-23).

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrew 2:14,15).

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." (Rev. 14:13)

Even in the Old Testament it says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15).

Christ said, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev. 1:18).

A little girl died at a hotel where she and her father were staying. The mother was already dead. Just two people followed the body to the cemetery, the father and the minister. The man's grief was great. At the grave he took from his pocket a key, unlocked the casket and looked on the face of his child once

more, then silently closed the casket, and handed the key to the keeper of the cemetery. On the way back to the city the minister quoted to the broken hearted man (Revelation 1:18), explaining the Lord Jesus though dead was now alive. "But what is that about the keys?" the man asked. "It means this," said the minister. "You think the key to your little girl's casket is in the hands of the keeper of the cemetery. Let me tell you, the key to your little girl's grave is in the hands of the Son of God, and he will come some morning and use it." Then the light broke through the man's tears, and he saw the glory of the Resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is so important that without faith in the Jesus who arose there can be no hope of salvation.

Unless you become one of God's children, adopted by grace into His family you cannot inherit eternal life. Just how can I become one of God's children. Paul explains that it is through our resurrection with Christ in baptism. How is this possible?

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:3-11).

The best news the world has ever had came from a graveyard near Jerusalem.

Questions:

1. Matching: Old Testament Belief in the Resurrection

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| _____ Moses | a. hoped to go be with his dead infant son |
| _____ Elijah and Elisha | b. while preparing to sacrifice Isaac believed God would resurrect him |
| _____ David | c. "If a man dies shall he live again?" |
| _____ Hannah | d. "the spirit will return to God who gave it" |
| _____ Sheol | e. came out alive after three days in belly of a sea creature |
| _____ Abraham | f. seen alive at the transfiguration |
| _____ Solomon | g. God "brings down to the grave and brings up" |
| _____ Daniel | h. Hades |
| _____ Job | i. raised to boys from the dead |
| _____ Jonah | j. "those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life |

2. Explain why *sheol* is more than just the dead body in the grave.

3. Which sect of the Jews in the New Testament did not believe in the resurrection?
4. What is the greatest proof of the future resurrection of the dead?
5. Why is the resurrection so crucial to the Gospel message?
6. What is the consequence if Christ has not been risen from the dead according to 1 Corinthians 15?
7. Explain the nature of the bodily resurrection all the saints can anticipate when Christ comes again according to 1 Corinthians 15.
8. What must a person do to have a personal hope in their future resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:3-5)?

Application & Discussion:

1. Find passages in the New Testament where Jesus predicted His resurrection.
2. How does the hope of a resurrection give you comfort in facing death?

Homework: Spend more time preparing for the resurrection when you will have a glorious body and spend less time and money glorifying your temporal body.

Judgment Day

A preacher was on a college campus one day and happened to be sitting at a bench with a freshman. As they began to converse the preacher seized upon the opportunity to encourage the young man by asking him, "what are you doing in college?" "I'm studying to get my bachelor's in Business," the young man enthusiastically replied. "After that?" the older man continued to pry. "I want to attend another university for my masters." "After that?" "I want get a good paying job." "After that?" Now the young man has to hesitate a bit as he considers an answer. "I...guess I will find a good woman to marry." The interrogation continues, "After that?" "Save money and start my on business making me rich so I can have children," the young man confidently responded. "After that?" Pausing to put even more thought into his answer, he said, "I guess...I will retire." "After that?" Now the question was starting to agitate the young man, who thought for a long silent moment and answered with a questioning tone, "I will die?" Finally, the older man ended the questioning with "then what?" The only response was an excuse to go off to class.

Judgment Day is a Certainty

Judgment Day is as Sure as Death

The Bible answers the question: after death, what then? *"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Heb. 9:27). Most men and women accept the fact they will surely pass on from this life one day. Nothing is as sure as death and taxes – and Judgment Day.

Judgment Day is Inescapable

One the day no one can avoid Judgment. There will be no hiding in the crowds of mankind. One will not sneak out with the others about to enter into Heaven. God will not overlook any one single soul. *"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Rom. 14:12).

Judgment Day is Appointed by God

Paul told the Athenians on Mars' Hill, *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead"* (Acts 17:30-31). So get out your appointment book and schedule the Day of Judgment, just remember God is the only one who can set the scheduled time of the appointment. God is always right. If He appoints a day of Judgment, then no one or nothing will stop Him. God tells no lies and makes no mistakes. Many things in this life are uncertain, but the judgment is a certainty.

Judgment Day Known Only to God

No one knows the day of Judgment except God. It will take place after the Lord returns and only God the Father knows when that will be. Jesus said, *"but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"* (Matt. 24:36). He also informed His disciples Judgment will be after the last day (John 12:48). Judgment Day will mark the final event in the history of all mankind.

Judgment Day is by Divinity

Who will be mankind's judge on that Day of Judgment? Paul explained in Acts 17:31 that God will judge the world through Christ. All judgment has been given by the Father to the Son. Jesus said, *"for the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son"* (John 5:22). He will judge all mankind: both those who accept and even those who rejected Him. *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). His judgment will come upon those who refused to confess Him and obey the Gospel. He will judge those lukewarm Christians who tried to serve both Him and this world at the same time (Rev. 3:15,16).

Judgment Day is a Necessity

Need to Vindicated God's Justice

Why does God need a Judgment Day for all mankind? If man's eternal destiny is determined upon death why judge him. Consider this, when a man is driving drunk a police officer will pull him over and render his judgment in the form of a ticket and takes him to jail. When the man appears in court the evidence of his guilt will be placed before the judge. Upon finding him guilty the man will face the phase of judgment where the judge hands down the sentence, he must serve. In the same way God will take those who are in Hades and on Judgment Day make them aware of their final punishment or blessing.

Reward the Righteous

God wants a great day of reckoning to show His justice and to give vengeance. At the Judgment all the saints will be reminded of their good deeds for all to hear (Matt. 24:34-36). If you could be any man or woman in the Bible who would you want to be? Consider the man to whom the master gave two or five talents. Wouldn't you want to hear on Judgment Day what they heard their master say: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord"* (Matt. 25:23)? *"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment"* (2 Pet. 2:9). The saints need not be ashamed before God at His coming (1 John 2:38), if they are found ready to face the Judgment. In fact, Christians should be confident in that Day (1 John 4:17). Only those who love His appearing shall be judged worthy to receive a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).

Sentence the Wicked

Furthermore, the wicked will be convinced at the Judgment of their unrighteousness (Matt. 25:41-45). *"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'"* (Jude 1:14-15). God punished the wicked men of old, such as, Cain, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, Nadab and Abihu, so His Divine fairness demands that He punish all the wicked on the Day of Judgment. The wicked may not be convinced of God's just Judgment in life or death or in Hades or even at the Second Coming of the Lord, but they will understand when they stand before the Judgment bar on high. *"As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God"* (Rom. 14:11). The fact that all will stand before God to give an account to One so righteous and just should be cause for all to tremble in fear (Acts 24:25).

Needed to Glorify God

Another reason for a need for the universal Day of Judgment upon mankind is for the glory of God. Sin rebels against God and blasphemies His holy name and nature. Whereas, the righteousness of the saints glorify Him before the world. *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil. 2:9-11).

Judgment Day is Conducted Universally

The Living and the Dead

Peter warns, *"they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead"* (1 Peter 4:5). One's appointment with death will not cause anyone to miss their appointment with God on the Day of Judgment. In fact, the dead will be raised, so they can face the Judgment.

All Nations

In Christ's parable of the talents, the one talent man who squandered his opportunities so he was judged by his Master, *"and cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* *When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory"* (Matt. 25:30-31). In Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats, He is demonstrated as a shepherd who is dividing his flock: the sheep are separated from the goats. The sheep represent the righteous of every nation whereas the goats represent the wicked of every nation.

Saints

“The Lord will judge His people” (Heb. 10:30). In fact, Peter says, “for the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17).

The Wicked

All those who are deemed wicked by God will face Judgment Day. Those who do not know God and those who do not obey the Gospel. *“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Th. 1:7b-9).* Those who commit sexual immorality. *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).* Not only will wicked men be judged, but Peter and Jude remind us that God judges the fallen angels as well (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

Judgment Day is Without Partiality

A courtroom was very noisy. The Judge began to pound and pound his gavel. Once the crowd was quieted, the judge said, “unless you all keep quiet I am going to be forced to pass judgment and a sentence against this poor innocent man before I hear a single word of testimony.”

Perhaps the worse judge would be the one who shows partiality. Such is not part of the character of God, *“for there is no partiality with God” (Rom. 2:11).* All will face judgment: the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the believer and the atheist, etc. God will not judge anyone on the basis of wealth, nationality, race, occupation, skin tone, social positions, friendships, and personalities.

Judgment Day is About Accountability

Judged According to Our Deeds

Both the righteous and the wicked will give an account to God for all things done in the body. *“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” (2 Cor. 5:10).* It is God *“who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’” (Rom. 2:6).* God will also judge man according to the deeds man should have done and did not do. *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Js. 4:17).*

Judged According to Our Thoughts

After Simon sinned in attempting to purchase a gift of God from Peter, Peter rebuked him and told him to pray that the very thought of his heart might be forgiven (Acts 8:22). The origin of sin is in the thoughts of the heart (James 1:13-15). Jesus warned that the thoughts of hate were just as sinful as murder, and the thoughts of lust are as wrong as adultery (Matt. 5). We are what we think (Prov. 23:7). If we think wicked thoughts, we are wicked in our hearts. God will judge all the secret thoughts of the heart. *“For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl. 12:14).*

Judged According to Our Words

Jesus warned, *“but I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36).* This includes words spoken in gossip and flattery. Words which include profanity, cussing, evil euphemisms, etc. Jesus would include in this list even idle conversation which does not build up but takes down. The tongue is very wild, powerful, and dangerous, but it can be tamed and controlled with great effort (James 1:19; 3:2f). We need to watch our conversation with others that our words be of pure motive and needful. Men will be judged not only for what they say, but what they did not say when it was needful and even how the words were delivered. *“Speak the truth in love.”*

Judged According to God’s Word

The purpose of Judgment Day is being held accountable before God for what we have said, done, and thought. God’s Judgment will not be inconsistent, unfair or ambiguous in any way. All will be judged by the same standard, the Word of God. Jesus said, *“he who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).* Paul wrote, *“but we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things”*

(Rom. 2:2).

Conclusion

In Will Thompson's hymn, "There's A Great Day Coming," He describes Judgment Day as a great day, a bright day and a sad day. It is a great day in that it is the final one for all mankind to be gathered before the great throne of God. It is a bright day in that all the righteous will receive the eternal reward. It is a sad day in that the majority of humanity will not enter into eternal life (Matt. 7:13,14; 21-23). Which sentence will be handed down to you on Judgment Day? Are you ready for your final exam?

Questions:

1. According to Hebrews 9:27 Judgment Day is a sure as _____.
2. Why is it that only God knows when Judgment Day will occur?
3. T F Judgment Day will mark the final event in the history of all mankind.
4. Who will be mankind's judge on that Day of Judgment?
5. Why does God need a Judgment Day for all mankind?
6. Why will faithful Christians not be ashamed of Judgment Day?
7. When will all mankind finally recognize God's greatness?
8. Who will be Judged on that Day?
9. In what three areas of life will a man be judged by God?

10. What will be the standard used to judge mankind?

Application & Discussion:

1. List some Bible men and women who you want not want to be on Judgment Day.

2. What are some things you can do every day to be prepared every moment to face the Judgment?

Homework: Start studying and preparing yourself for the Final Exam. Do NOT wait till the last minute of life to cram for the Exam!

Book of Life

It is a great honor to have your name listed in a book among some very notable people of history. Yet you are probably wondering what kind of chance you would have since you have with no special skills, titles, education, money, or influence on history. There is a book we all not only can, but must strive to have our names listed. This particular book is the greatest book of lists ever to exist. A list of great honor and reward which will be one day read before all. A book which is by far the most unique ever conceived. Not only is it the oldest, it is the newest book, because it is still in the process of being written and edited. The first entry was penned with the creation of man. What is this great book? It is called "the Book of Life".

This book was first mentioned by Moses when he came down from Mt. Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments. Upon seeing the great sin of the people he broke the tablets containing the commandments. Not only was he quite angry, so was God. The Lord wanted to destroy the people. Yet Moses intervened, *"Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."* And the LORD said to Moses, *"Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book"* (Ex. 32:32,33). Moses even sought to exchange himself for his sinning people. This passage clearly establishes that the book in question was neither the Law of Moses or the Bible. Instead, a book reflective of the lives of those who follow God and remain in faithful relationship with Him.

The practice of having a list of names in keeping national registers and genealogies was an ancient custom quite common in Israel. All the Israelites who came up out of Egypt were put down in a master-roll of the living, called *"the writing of the house of Israel"* (Ezek. 13:9). Each year the dead were taken out. Those upon these rolls were guaranteed the rights and privileges of citizenship.

The idea of a record of deeds is found in the Psalms. *"Then I said, 'Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me'"* (Ps. 40:7). *"You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?"* (Ps. 56:8). God is seen as keeping account of his people's faithfulness and disobedience.

There are other references to this book in the writings of the prophets. Daniel refers to it in the day of Judgment (Dan. 7:10; 12:1). The prophet Malachi was struggling against moral decline in his day. Those who were evildoers were blessed by the material goods of life. This was an apparent injustice. The prophet reassures his generation that God will rectify this in *"a book of remembrance"* by which a clear distinction will be made between the righteous and the ungodly (Mal. 3:16).

In the New Testament, Jesus told the 70 that there is great joy in being on this roll. They came back from their limited commission elated over the fact that they had miraculous gifts and power of demons. Jesus said, *"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven"* (Lk. 10:20).

In Philippians 4:3, the apostle Paul mentions some of his fellow workers who have their names recorded in the Book of Life. This clearly confirms that you and I may have our names recorded in heaven at this very moment, depending upon the way we are living our lives today.

Another unique aspect of the Book of Life is its well-known author: Jesus Christ. It should be no surprise, after all, Christ is the author of our faith, salvation, and eternal life. While on earth Christ never wrote a book as a matter of fact the only writing we have knowledge of is His writing in the dirt in John 8, even then we are not told what He wrote. The man who never wrote a book, set millions of men in motion to write an unlimited number of books about His life and His church. Today, the life of mere men put the pen of Christ in motion by the life they choose to live. Those who obey Him will have their names recorded in the Book of Life. At judgment only they will be permitted to enter into heaven. *"But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life"* (Rev. 21:27).

The Book of Revelation mentions it the most - 7 times: Rev. 3:4; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27; 22:19. The use of the number seven is a typical characteristic of Revelation. It denotes "perfection and completion". Indeed, the book of life is perfect and complete containing only those names of the faithful.

This book will be completed on the last day of mankind's existence upon earth. It will be opened on the Day of Judgment (Rev. 20:12). All will be there both the *"great and small."* They will be judged as those arraigned before the courts. The Book of Life will be opened beside the Word of Christ, the New Testament, which will also be used to judge us (Jn. 12:48). Then all men will receive justice according to what he did while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). Judgment will not be based upon arbitrary, submissive, or superficial evidence, but on a record of all deeds. Verdicts must be according to the true standard.

One's eternal destiny will be established upon whether his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. *"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"* (Rev. 20:15). Those whose names are found therein will be received into heaven (Rev. 21:27). Thus, this book has both an inclusive and an exclusive effect.

Since no one knows the day this book will be finished and then opened for Judgment, we must all live so as to keep our names written there. Christ does not even know the time (Mt. 24:36). He will come as a thief in the night (2 Pet. 3:10). There will be no last minute additions to this book. When the saints go marching in, the wicked are not going to sneak in behind the band. The righteous will be rewarded like the graduating student has his name called before the faculty and audience when he is given his diploma.

It is unlikely that I will ever write a best-seller. However, my Lord is writing one. Every day of my life I dictate to Him another page to the Book of Life. Thus, in the final analysis the only narrations that will matter will be each individual's life record.

Is Your Name Written There?

While touring Mammoth Cave in Kentucky several years ago, I was impressed with the fact that those who toured the caves long before my great-grandparents were ever born marked their initials and the date upon the bare walls. This was done much the same way as John and Sue will carve their's in the bark of a tree. Or a vandal will spray paint "Class of '97" upon an overpass. Men love the fame of name. Part of this is to have special recognition by having our names put into a book, newspapers, or upon a list. Statesmen are honored when their names are recorded in history books. The athlete dreams of having his efforts enshrined in the record books. For some people the mere hope of their names being inscribed upon a particular list will become the very incentive for their success. There is within all of us a longing to be immortalized, remembered.

There is often much debate as to who should be placed upon a certain list. Yet, there is a roll which is an infallible record: the Lamb's Book of Life. Christ does not add the names of any whose name should not be enrolled, nor does He fail to add the name of one whose name should be enrolled. Men sometimes keep church rolls, but their record keeping is not infallible. Men may add the name of some insincere person, or unrighteous men may strike from the church roll the name of some righteous saint of God. It is quite possible that my name be on the "church roll down here" and not on the "roll up yonder". Many people live under the delusion that if their names are on some church roll, then all is well. Rest assured that God knows his people (2 Tim. 2:19).

A most pertinent concern for us is whether or not we have met the divine criteria for having our names enrolled upon the pages of the Book of Life. What must one do to be assured that his name is written there?

You Must Be Born Again

In so many of the old Bibles, there is a family register; a list of family names. When a child was born, his or her name was enrolled in the family register. It is the same with the spiritual family. One must be "born again" in order to be enrolled in the family register. When Nicodemus

came to Jesus by night inquiring how one could enter the Kingdom, Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3:5). Sin is what keeps one out of the book of life. Baptism is when and where the sin is washed away in water allowing us to arise and walk in newness of life (Ac. 22:16; Rom. 6:3-18). Only this book can assure us of life eternal, because it is the Lamb's and because those in it are those who have obeyed the Word of God.

You Must Be In The Church

According to Hebrews 12:23 and Revelation 13:8; 17:8 only members of the church have their names written in heaven. If a person can be saved outside the church, he can be saved without having his name written in heaven. The Lord adds us to the church (Ac. 2:47) and He adds us to the book. No follower of a false system of religion has his name on "the roll up yonder". John made it evident that those who follow the Lord will not be drawn after the Beast to pay homage to it and the faithful should not be deceived by the Beast.

You Must Remain Faithful

Some try to use the fact that there is a heavenly Book of Life to prove the impossibility of apostasy. The Book of Life is not something that was finished before the world began. Rather, names are added to it, and names are blotted out of it. Moses realized that God could remove his name from this roll book (Ex. 32:32,33). David asked that the adversaries of God's people be blotted out. *"Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous"* (Ps. 69:28).

You Must Be A Worker

Euodia and Syntyche were two women in the Philippians church singled out by Paul for special urging "to be of the same mind in the Lord." They had been highly valued co-laborers of Paul and his fellow workers. Somehow a conflict had arisen between these two good workers. They would be "genuine yokefellow" by resolving their differences and to join together in doing the work. Paul said *"they fought at my side in spreading the gospel"* (Phil.4:3). What a calamity it would be if, after all, the gospel should now be hindered by their inability to work together. Paul in effect was saying: "Get off each others backs and get back to work". If they continue in godly service, their names will out shine and out last the greatest of the ages, while the greatest fade into nothingness. Let us all work to have our names recorded in the imperishable memory of God.

You Must Overcome and Remain Pure

Sardis seemed impregnable, sitting on a hill surrounded by high cliffs which no army could scale. Cocky and confident, the people of Sardis slept soundly while Cyrus, the Persian king, and his army climbed the steep cliffs. When the sun rose over Sardis on that day in 549 B.C., its inhabitants discovered they should have been watching instead of sleeping. Did they learn a lesson? Perhaps - but they failed to tell it to their children. In 214 B.C. Sardis again fell when Antiochus the Great surprised the sleeping city by scaling the cliffs that night. Many succumbing to spiritual attack while sleeping. Sardis had a reputation for strength, but in reality it was spiritually comatose (Rev. 3:1). Like a sergeant rousing a sleeping soldier, the Lord exhorted the church to "wake up!" (v. 2). If they failed to wake up, they would suffer the same fate the city had known centuries before (v. 3). For the remnant who remained true to Christ two promises are given. First, they will walk with the Lord in white (v. 4). Second, *"and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels"* (Rev. 3:5).

You Must Not Add to Or Subtract From God's Word

Christ warned, *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Rev.

22:18,19). How many violated this by adding instrumental music to worship and subtracting baptism from the plan of salvation!

You can only be assured that our name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, if you only comply with the terms of enrollment.

Questions:

1. What is the oldest book of all time?
2. What all is recorded in the Book of Life?
3. Who is the author of the Book of Life?
4. How many times is this Book mentioned in the book of Revelation?
5. When will this Book be completed?
6. When will this Book be opened and used?
7. What happens when one's name is not found in this Book on the Day of Jugment?
8. What rewards await those whose names are in this Book?
9. List some things a person must do to have their name in the Book of Life.

10. Is there anything a person can do to have their name removed from the Book of Life? Explain.

Application & Discussion:

1. In what publications of man has your name been listed. How does this compare to having your name in the Book of Life?
2. How accurate or trustworthy is the Book of Life? Explain.

Homework: Learn the lyrics to the hymn: "Is My Name Written There?" and sing it on the way back and forth to work this week.

Everyone Should Desire Heaven

Heaven is For Real

The five physicians were attending James Smithson, founder of the Smithsonian Institute, all had different diagnosis as to what was ailing the famous chemist. Their amplified squabbling finally induced Smithson to remark: "Why don't you perform an autopsy to discover what is the matter with me? I am dying to know what my ailment is." Smithson is right there are something that can only be known for sure after death. Many are curious as to what heaven is like. The only way to experience heaven is by way of a hearse.

Yet, not everyone believes in heaven. One man who questioned the idea of heaven as absurd said, "Now look here, preacher, you have worried me. I am bothered. How in the world will I ever get my shirt down over my wings?" The preacher replied, "Now look here, you ain't got no problem at all. Your problem will not be, 'How will I get my shirt down over my wings?' but, 'How will I get my hat down over my horns?'" Some like this man have concluded that...

Heaven is a Mere Myth

John Lennon wrote in 1971 a song titled IMAGINE "Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try. No Hell below us, above us only sky". Other religions dismiss heaven as a myth.

In the comprehensive work on yoga by Mishra called The Testbook of Yoga Psychology. "Heaven and hell are the products of man's mind." Alfred North Whitehead wrote: "Can you imagine anything more appallingly idiotic than the Christian idea of heaven? What kind of deity is it that would be capable of creating angels and men to sing his praises day and night to all eternity? It is, of course, the figure of an Oriental despot, with his inane and barbaric vanity. Such a conception is an insult to God" (Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead, 1953).

Oddly enough it is not only atheists and world religions, but also some "Christian" religions which reject the idea of heaven as a fancy myth. Unitarian Universalism confesses the following: "it seems safe to say that no Unitarian Universalist believes in a resurrection of the body, a literal heaven or hell, or any kind of eternal punishment". Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy, teaches that there is no death. They believe that heaven and hell are states of thought, not places. To her people experience their own heaven or hell right here on earth.

Accordingly, death is all there is and there is no resurrection to a better life. If so, the Christian life is a futile existence. Nothing has any meaning if death is the end. Paul wrote, *"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"* (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Those who believe in the resurrection, also believe...

Heaven Is a Real Place

Heaven is not a state of mind on earth. The City of God is not a "pie-in-the-sky" fantasy. Some view eternal life as a carrot dangling in front of the plowing mule to dense to know that no matter how far he goes he will never sink his teeth into it. Heaven is a real place, not a myth or a cruel joke.

The word "heaven" is used in three distinct ways in Scriptures: 1) the atmospheric heavens, the sky; 2) the celestial heaven, i.e., outer space. the universe, thus, "heaven and earth" and 3) the perfect and eternal abode of God. In the Greek it is *ouranos* -"That which is raised up". It appears 284 times in

the New Testament . It is this heaven that is under discussion.

The human soul has always longed for heaven. The Egyptians inscribed the name "yaru" or heaven upon the walls of the ancient pyramids. This longing for a better realm of existence has often been the subject of modern literature. Frank Baum wrote in the "THE WIZARD OF OZ" of a odd group in search of the Wizard of Emerald City. Sir James Barrie's Peter Pan is living in a magical place called Never-Never Land. Louis Carroll wrote that Alice had her Wonderland. Every fairy tale engages a fantasy world where time stops and problems fade.

Throughout the history of mankind on this planet generations have longed for a place of supernatural bliss. The Greek and Roman religions had their Elysium , an abode of recompense for the righteous dead. The Germans and Scandinavians had Valhalla where the dead had the capability of continuing the enjoyments of mortal existence. North American Indians look forward to the happy hunting grounds after this temporal life. Buddhism's heaven is called Nirvana, a condition of obliteration of all yearning and of oneness with Brahma, the creator god. Islam's Qur'an describes various levels of heaven (known to them as "paradise") each filled with fleshly delights which are open and unflagging.

All these concepts of heaven pale in comparison to the place described by the writers of the New Testament. If you really want to know what heaven is like you need to listen to someone who is there. Jesus did not believe heaven to be a "myth" or "state of mind" or "dream". On two different occasions He called it "a place" (topos). He told His disciples, *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:2,3). Notice that He called it a "house" (oikos). Jesus taught His disciples that Heaven is just as real a place as our home.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, "But either there is "pie in the sky" (reference to "heaven", drv) or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no." Either Christ lied about heaven being a real place or there is a heaven.

A little boy stood on a windy hillside, flying his kite. he continued to release the string of the kite, and it went higher and higher until it was completely out of sight. Someone asked the little boy how he knew there was still a kite on the other end. He replied, "I know it's there; I feel it tugging on the line." Heaven may not be seen with human eyes, but by faith we feel it tugging at our souls.

In Heaven There Will Be No...

Did you ever walk into a place or test drive a car and proclaim, "Wow, this is like heaven. It has everything!" The truth is Heaven will not have everything. In reality if it had everything it would not be Heaven. What makes Heaven such a wonderful place are the things which will not be there.

Tears

In Revelation 21:4 concerning Heaven we are told, *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* Sometimes to understand just what something is we have to first look at what it is not. John uses five negatives to tell us about Heaven. Tears are just as common to this life on earth as the other four. Everyone cries from time to time. Imagine the buckets of tears shed by the six billion people everyday on this side of death. Now imagine a place where not one tear shall be shed and you have envisioned heaven.

We weep for many different reasons. The Israelites wept because of their sins (Jud. 2:4,5). David wept from the news of the deaths of Abner and Absalom. *"Jesus wept"* is the shortest verse in the Bible (Jn. 11:31). He cried when he learned of the death of his friend Lazarus. He wept in the Garden the night He was betrayed. The Ephesian elders wept when Paul saw them last (Acts 20).

In Heaven there will be no tears because God shall wipe them all away. Secondly, there will be no death, no sorrow or pain to give us reason to cry. When you get to Heaven there will be no need to look for a box of kleenex or a hanky.

Death

No greater enemy, no greater fear, no greater cause of sorrow can be found on earth than death. Death entered into the world because of sin. “*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*” (Romans 5:12). All have sinned (Rom. 3:23), therefore all shall die (Rom. 6:23).

Imagine never having to stand by a graveside and mourn the loss of a loved one. No more goodbyes, no wondering if you will ever see one another again, no tears, no loneliness, etc. Instead, one long, loving, living happy reunion in Heaven.

Over ten years ago I lost my father to skin cancer. A righteous man of strength, youth, and good health claimed by death. Death is not fair. It does not discriminate. We are all terminal. One day death will come for each one of us. However, one day Christ will come again and death will be no more (Rev. 20:14).

Sorrow & Pain

This life is filled with its moments of joy. However, it is also filled with just as many memories of pain and sorrow. These come from the trials and temptations; the persecutions and the problems which confront us. They have their purpose. They produce patience and faith (1 Peter 1:6,7). These negative aspects of living life on earth are a constant reminder that heavenly bliss will never be found on this side of the grave.

When you became a Christian, a follower of Jesus it was not with the promise that life would be endless joy and comfort. Instead, He promised that the world would hate and persecute us. That Satan would continue to tempt us. Pain and sorrow would not be lessened simply because we were baptized into Christ. He did promise to go and prepare a place for us where there will be no more pain and sorrow.

The following poem titled “End Of The Journey” helps put this into perspective.

Light after darkness, gain after loss;
Strength after weakness, crown after cross;
Sweet after bitter, hope after fears;
Home after wandering, praise after tears;
Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain;
Sight after mystery, peace after pain;
Joy after sorrow, calm after blast;
Rest after weariness, sweet rest at last;
Near after distant, gleam after gloom;
Love after loneliness, life after tomb;
After long agony, rapture of bliss;
Right was the pathway, leading to this.

Corruption or Decay

Jesus told his disciples on the Sermon on the Mount “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*” (Matthew 6:19,20). Heaven is a place of perfect security where things are not corrupted and do not decay. On the other hand, this world is a decaying, rotting, disintegrating place in which to live. No matter how hard one tries, things still break, robbers continue stealing, and people still grow old, wear out, and die. Just like a house is in constant need of repair and upkeep, so is everything on this planet.

Yet John tells us that he “...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” (Revelation 21:1). A new place to live where the doors will never creak, the plumbing will never leak, and you will never grow old and weak. The city which God built will never need a maintenance department.

Night or Darkness

Can you remember as a child fearing the night and the accompanying darkness? Even as an adult we like to live on well lit streets, shopping where the parking lot is lighted at night. Darkness and night keep us from working, playing, seeing, etc. It provides cover for those engaging in criminal activities.

In Heaven there will be no need for concern about lighting. The Apostle John further describes Heaven: *“And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there)” (Revelation 21:23-25).*

Several years ago the World Series was canceled because of an earthquake in Oakland. Helicopters beamed bright lights down at the darkened city to keep looting and crime to a minimum. Isn't it pitiful how people conduct themselves when left without any light from above? Those who live in sin and enjoy wickedness love the darkness (John 3:19f). We should seriously reexamine ourselves if we really think that we can harbor any kind of darkness in our lives and still go to Heaven. We view a child's fear of the dark as an example of their innocence and immaturity. How should we view adults who are afraid of the “light”?

The Wicked or Wickedness

Evil companions and associations with sinful people make life a constant struggle. We lock our cars and houses because we don't trust each other. We watch our children closely to avoid them being kidnaped. We pay taxes to keep criminals in prison. Have you ever went to an event hoping that certain people would not be there because they would ruin it for you? Or have you had an event become an unpleasant experience because others who also showed up? If so, you understand the God cannot let just anybody and everybody wander into Heaven, because by their very presence they would turn it into hell.

Many wrong ideas about Heaven have been propagated throughout the years, such as, Peter will meet you at the gate, everyone gets wings and a halo and becomes an angel, all roles and relationship are the same as on earth, etc. However, the most destructive myth about heaven is that everyone is going to go there. This is the doctrine of universalism. New Age cult leader Sun Myung Moon of The Unification Church believes that “God will not desert any person eternally. By some means...they will be restored.” Others defend this view because they cannot believe that a loving God could send anyone to eternal hell. They want everyone to live happily ever after. If all go to Heaven, why have a hell? How would you feel if Adolf Hitler or Sadaam Hussien lived next door to you? Jesus, Himself, warned that “not everyone” is going to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 7:21). John lists those who are excluded from heaven. *“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.... But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life” (Revelation 21:8,27).*

After considering God's lists of “Whose Who in Hell” and consider His list of “Whose Who in Heaven”, the more appealing the latter becomes. Satan and his angels shall not be there (Mt. 25:41). All those who don't know God and are disobedient to the Gospel will not be there (2 Th. 1:7-9). The home of the soul has no need of the gates being closed because there is no evil men to shut out. They will be secure in hell.

Hungering & Thirsting

The two strongest urges of life are hunger and thirst. If these desires are not met we will die. Much of what we do on earth is to secure the needs of these desires. Heaven is a place where we will not be enslaved by these or any other desire of the flesh. *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 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. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations"* (Revelation 22:1,2). Heaven is picture as a place where the tree of life stands on the banks of the river of life. A picture of perfect perpetual provision of life's necessities.

Are you tired of witnessing all the wars, disease, destruction, decay and death this world has to offer? Does the nightly world news depress you? Well the Good News from God is that there is a place free from all these dark and ugly aspects. Are you will to make preparations go to Heaven?

In Heaven There Will Be...

A little blind child had a surgical operation performed that resulted in the restoration of her sight. After she had enjoyed taking in all the beauty that sight had allowed her to see for the first time she asked her mother, "Why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" The mother replied, "I tried to tell you, my dear, but the words wouldn't make you understand." Such is the difficulty in describing the heavenly realm to earth bound creatures. Imagine going to the other side of the galaxy and discovering a strange world of unique inhabitants, then returning to give an account of what you saw. The only way you could explain it would be in terms of comparison or contrast to this world which we are familiar. Obviously, we at least understand that heaven is a beautiful and wonderful place. After all, when someone returns from Hawaii and describe the experience to a friend they will say, "It was heaven" or when they eat a piece of chocolate exclaim, "This is heavenly".

God

Nothing makes men feel more important, nor is anything more satisfying and exciting than to be in the presence of a great person. Heaven may be an unknown region but it has some well-known inhabitants. God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be there. Without God Heaven would not be Heaven. "It is not in heaven one finds God, but in God one finds heaven." Heaven is all about God. God's presence is the light of it; His throne is the center of it; His worship is the occupation of it; and His people are the citizens of it.

Fellow-Saints

"In the ancient city of Ur 60 to 80 skeletal remains of the escorts, guards, musicians and retainers who had marched into the extensive death pit and died sacrificial deaths that they might accompany their king or queen into the after-life" (Archaeological Supplement of the New Chain-Reference Bible, BB. Kirkbride co., 1964, pp. 363,364). God's servants will also die and be with Him. We are to take up the cross and follow Christ faithfully until death. Some very famous people will be there and they are all related through the Father. Heaven will be the biggest family reunion of all time. When you list the redeemed of all ages and add to that your own special list of loved ones and then add to that the presence of our Father and our Savior and our blessed Holy Spirit, heaven becomes irresistible. Do you want to spend forever with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?

Home

An engagement ring that fell into the sea off the west coast of Sweden in 1994 found its way back to its owner. The ring was consumed by a mussel that turned up in a load of shellfish caught by fisherman Peder Carlsson. Carlsson was able to return the ring to its owner because the woman, Agenta Winstedt, had her name engraved on the inside. If we bear Christ's name,

we know we'll be returned home one day to Him.

Home touches a tender feeling in all of us. There are few joys that rival that of going home. Soldiers stationed on foreign soil long for home. A patient asks, "Doctor, when can I go home!" For us as Christians we have learned that this world is not our home. Our citizenship is in heaven. Anyone who really understands the nature of heaven and loves God will not have a desire to call earth, home. We do not live here, we are not at home, instead we are sojourners headed for home.

About the year A.D. 125 a Greek by the name of Aristeides was writing to one of his friends about the new religion, Christianity. He was trying to explain the reasons for its extraordinary success. Here is a sentence from one of his letters: "If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby".

Rest

One of the seven beatitudes of Revelation states, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'"* (Rev. 14:13). Christians who are weary from the labors of teaching, fighting false teachers, and the wiles of the devil can have hope of eternal rest. Christians do not retire in this life, retirement comes just after death, not just before it.

Worship and Service to God

A place of eternal inactivity is not the heaven of the Bible. How many different occupations are there in the United States? It has been estimated there are over 40,000. In heaven there is no need for workers, just those who are worshipers. Heaven is not a place of inactivity, but of eternal worship. All praise God continually (Rev. 4:8-11). On earth only a privileged few are called upon to serve the president. In heaven all will be serving God (Rev. 22:1-5).

If this does not sound appealing to you than you will not be happy in heaven. Those filled with pride and self-centeredness want to receive praise not give it. They want to be served, not serve. Think about it: if you do not like to serve God here, what makes you think you will want to serve Him over there.

Singing

The last couple of years I have been blessed to be with some 1,500 other Christians in a auditorium in Tampa for the Florida College lectures. Before each evening's lecture we engaged in about 25 minutes of singing under the direction of R. J. Stevens. This "experience" has allowed me to taste what Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-12 is describing as Heaven. Heaven is a place where all of God's singers of all the ages, not just 1,500 in February, lift their voices in praising God. A song we often sing goes like this: "As we sing here on earth songs of sadness or mirth, 'Tis a foretaste of rapture to come; But our joy can't compare with the glory up there, When all of God's singers get home..."

New Jerusalem

God said that this earth is going to be destroyed by a fire so hot *that "the elements will melt with intense heat!"* (2 Peter 3:12). So, it looks like we are going to need a new home! In Revelation 21:10,16 heaven is described as a New Jerusalem. The new heavens and new earth are not a renewal of the old but they are going to be entirely of a different nature. The word "new" in the original language, is a term which signifies new as in different. The Greek word for time "Kaninos is what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attraction" (Theological Dict. of the N.T., III:447).

Are you looking for a new city to live in where the neighborhood never deteriorates? Where the taxes never raise? Where it is always big enough, beautiful and bright? May we suggests the New Jerusalem. Besides God will take care of all the moving expenses.

Infinite Beauty

A little girl was walking with her daddy under a starlit sky. After several moments of silence, she remarked, "Father, I've been thinking. If the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, just imagine what the right side will be!"

"Heaven is the most beautiful word in the human vocabulary." We call things which are aesthetic "heavenly". In Revelation 21:18-21 heaven's beauty is described with walls of jasper, gates of pearl, streets of gold, a great throne of God in the center, and having a river of life with the tree of life on it's bank. No city can compare to the one awaiting us up there.

Invest a great deal of our lives in procuring beautiful things on this earth. However, one day when the Lord returns it will all be burned up. How about investing our time, energy and money in things that won't burn?

Eternal Bliss

In describing Heaven Huckleberry Finn said, "All a body would have to do was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever." Does not make heaven sound like a place of eternal bliss, does it? A literary critic, in describing the vast differences between Shelley and Milton, said that the only things they had in common was their inability to think of anything interesting to do in heaven. Perhaps, all the interesting people will be in hell. Yet, when we sum up what will not be in heaven compared to what will be who can turn down the offer to go. Five minutes after we are in heaven we are going to want to stay there forever, and we will.

As Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveler of the 13th century, lay dying, he was urged by his detractors to withdraw the stories he had told about China and the lands of the Far East. But he refused, saying, "I have not told half of what I saw". Perhaps, John's vision did not tell us the half about the wonders of Heaven.

Questions:

1. List the various groups who do not believe in Heaven and explain their reasoning.
2. What have the various ancient civilizations called their idea of Heaven?
3. Show from the scriptures that Jesus believed Heaven to be a real place.
4. Why will there be no tears in Heaven?
5. What else will not be found in Heaven?

6. Who will not be in Heaven?
7. Who will be in Heaven?
8. Explain how Heaven is a rest?
9. How does the Bible relate to physical man the beauty of Heaven?
10. Explain then nature of this "*New Jerusalem*"?

Application & Discussion:

1. Consider for a moment if God would allow everyone in Heaven no matter how evil. Would Heaven still be a place you would want to spend eternity? Explain
2. Do you think you will ever be bored in Heaven? Explain.

Homework: Stop trying to create a temporary heaven or paradise here on earth and start packing for the eternal Heaven with God.

Questions About Heaven?

Will We Know Each Other in Heaven?

A suggestion has been made that the three most popular questions asked in heaven will be: "where is old brother so and so?"; "what are you doing here?" and perhaps the most often asked question of them all will be: "how did I make here?"

Many Christians have a multitude of questions about Heaven? Some wonder whether or not we will know each other up there. Others wonder how big heaven is. Some wonder about the kind of body we will have? Still others wonder if they could really be happy in Heaven. Husbands and wives wonder whether they will still be married in Heaven. Surely, Heaven is a "wonder - full" place. Let us consider the first of these enquiries.

First, let us consider the objections some have to the idea of know each other in heaven. Some believe that since we will not have physical bodies like the ones which house our souls here on earth recognition will be impossible. However, angels do not have "bodies", yet are able to recognize one another (Dan. 10:13). Identity of souls may not be dependent upon physical form. Souls may more easily recognize one another. Furthermore, our bodies shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-53). This being the case, we shall not be known in heaven by our natural bodies as we are known here upon the earth.

Still others argue, "If I get to heaven and _____ is not there, I can't be satisfied." They argue that this would cause unhappiness in heaven. Yet, if the Father can wipe away all tears and we can learn to enjoy Heaven knowing that the ungodly and disobedient are in hell, so we can deal with loved ones who did not make it. After all, God loves them more than you ever did and He can be happy in Heaven know they are not there, and so can you. Perhaps, we will not be bother by such realizations as to who did not make it?

Sufficient evidence from the Scriptures exists showing that we will know each other in Heaven. When the great patriarch Abraham died at the age of 175 he was gathered to his people (Gen. 25:8,9). Although his body was laid in a new tomb, he was now with his people. This phrase, "gathered to his people," is found recorded at the death of many Old Testament saints. (Ishmael, Gen. 25:17; Isaac, Gen. 35:29; Jacob, Gen. 49:33; Aaron, Num. 20:24; Moses, Dt. 33:50; Josiah, 2 Ki. 22:20).

Abraham also figures into this argument in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Not only does the rich man recognize Lazarus who he knew in life but he also recognizes Abraham whom he had never even seen in a photograph. Furthermore, Abraham recognizes the rich man.

Concerning the death of Moses it is written, *"And the Lord said to Moses: 'Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them'"* (Deut. 31:16). The phrase *"rest with your fathers"* could not mean that Moses was simply buried with his forefathers. Moses was not buried in the sepulchers of his fathers, but in an unknown place *"in the valley of Moab"* (Deut. 34:6). Likewise, the phrase "gathered unto his people" would not refer to the burial of the body, but to the reunion of the spirit with those who had died before. Wilson states, "It is distinguished from death which precedes and from burial of the body which follows".

Later in Matthew 17:1-5 during the transfiguration of Jesus, both Moses and Elijah are recognized by Peter, James and John. The body of Moses turned to dust and Elijah had been changed. These men were clothed with different bodies and still somehow the disciples of Jesus recognized who they were even though they had lived at least several hundred years before Peter, James and John were born.

Sometime after the death of Samuel King Saul approach the witch of Endor who made a living as a medium. Saul wanted her to summon the spirit of the old dead prophet. To her surprise Samuel did appear at the seance. He rebuked Saul (1 Sam. 28:3-19). Not only did Samuel recognize King Saul but

the king recognized the dead prophet. Surely, personality and individuality survive death and exist in the realm of the dead.

Many of us are very familiar with the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba. According to Nathan the prophet because of David's sins, the first child from the union of David and Bathsheba would die after a week of suffering. While the child was dying David would not eat or get up and wash. After the child died he washed, anointed himself, and came into the house of the Lord to worship. He explained his behavior to a servant, "But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (1 Sam. 12:23). David believed he would see his infant son one day after death.

Consider for a moment Isaiah's prophecy of the death of the King of Babylon.

It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: "How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased! ... "Hell from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your stringed instruments; the maggot is spread under you, and worms cover you.' "Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms (Isaiah 14:3-4,8-11,16).

Upon his death the king of Babylon is recognized by those in Hades. The same thing is said of Pharaoh and his army in Ezekiel 32:17-32. On the other side of death these passages clearly indicated that even the wicked dead will recognize each other.

Read the following promises given by the apostle Paul to the disciples of the first century.

For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 1:13,14).

knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you (2 Cor. 4:14).

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

If we cannot recognize each other in after death or in Heaven who can we make since of these promises?

In his description of Heaven John promises that we will "*gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God*" (Rev. 22:1). This passage has given birth to a favorite hymn Christians have sung for years: "If we never meet again this side of heaven, As we struggle through this world and its strife. There's another meeting place somewhere in heaven."

Yes! A joyful reunion awaits the faithful who will not only know their loved ones from their lives but will recognize all of God's children.

Will We Have A New Body in Heaven?

One of many questions people have about Heaven is what kind of form or body will they have? Before we look at the scriptures, read the following story adapted from an unknown source.

Down below the surface of a quiet pond lived a little colony of water bugs. They were a happy colony, living far away from the sun. For many months they were very busy, scurrying over the soft mud on the bottom of the pond. They did notice that every once in a while one of their colony seemed to lose interest in going about with his friends. Clinging to the stem of a pond lily, he gradually moved out of sight and was seen no more. "Look!" said one of the water bugs to another. "One of our colony is climbing up the lily stalk. Where do you suppose he is going?" Up, up, up he went slowly. Even as they watched him, the water bug disappeared from sight. His friends waited and waited but he didn't return. "That's funny!" said one water bug to another. "Wasn't he happy here?" asked a second water bug. "Where do you suppose he went?" wondered a third. No one had an answer. They were greatly puzzled. Finally one of the water bugs, a leader in the colony, gathered his friends together. "I have an idea. The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk must promise to come back and tell us where he went and why." "We promise," they said solemnly. One spring day, not long after, the very water bug who had suggested the plan found himself climbing up the lily stalk. Up, up, up he went. Before he knew what was happening, he had broken through the surface of the water, and fallen onto the broad, green lily pad above. When he awoke, he looked about with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. A startling change had come to his old body. His movement revealed four silver wings and a long tail. Even as he struggled, he felt an impulse to move his wings. The warmth of the sun dried the moisture from the new body. He moved his wings again and suddenly found himself up above the water. He had become a dragonfly. Swooping and dipping in great curves, he flew through the air. He felt exhilarated in the new atmosphere. By and by, he lighted happily on a lily pad to rest. Then it was that he chanced to look below to the bottom of the pond. Why, he was right above his old friends, the water bugs! There they were, scurrying about, just as he had been doing some time before. Then he remembered the promise: "The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk will come back and tell where he went and why." Without thinking, he darted down. Suddenly he hit the surface of the water. "I can't return!" he said in dismay. "At least I tried, but I can't keep my promise. Even if I could go back, not one of the water bugs would know me in my new body. I guess I'll just have to wait until they become dragonflies, too. Then they'll understand what happened to me, and where I went." And the dragonfly winged off happily into his wonderful new world of sun and fresh air.

The fable of the water bugs and the dragonfly serves to illustrate the transformation that awaits those who die in the Lord. Many scriptures allude to this new body fitted for eternity. Our current body made of flesh is constantly aging and decaying. It is wearing out (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10). James Dobson once quipped that, here on earth, just about the time our faces clear up, our mind's gets muddled! After death we will put on an incorruptible body, not flesh (1 Cor. 15:51-54). Paul refers to this as "...the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). We will be like Christ (1 Jn. 3:2). Like His glorious body (Phil. 3:20,21).

Obviously, this new body is not fleshly like the old, but of a spiritual nature. Just what is this spiritual body like? As we have seen in the first article, it will be enough like our present one, though not flesh and blood, as to be recognizable. Man is made up of two parts: flesh and spirit. At death our spirits will remain with God, separated from our physical bodies until the resurrection on the day the Lord returns.

When Moses and Elijah were revealed to the disciples on the mountain of transfiguration, they were recognizable to Peter, James, and John. Just what that recognizable substance was like in that separated state the Bible does not say.

Just when will we receive this new body? Do we get it directly after death or do we receive it at the resurrection? The Seventh Day Adventist and certain other groups teach that the soul sleeps after death until the resurrection. The thing we can be certain of is this: Christians go directly into the presence of Christ at death. They are conscious and in command of their faculties. Moses had a transfigured body after death, so we should as well.

What about the apparent age of the body in heaven? If an infant dies, will he still be an infant in heaven? Remember that our new bodies won't be subject to the same limitations as they are now. Aging does not take place in Heaven. Baby has limitations in knowledge but it will know the Lord. Perhaps in whatever form we represent we will not suffer from the limitation of age whether young or old. After all

babies crawl. In heaven travel won't likely be a problem, after all where would you go if there was anywhere else you want to go.

In one of his lighter moments, Benjamin Franklin penned his own epitaph.

The Body of B. Franklin, Printer
Like the Cover of an old Book
Its contents torn out,
And striped of its Lettering and Gilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms,
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:
For it will, as he believed,
Appear once more
In a new & more perfect Edition,

One day in Heaven you will be bound in a new and perfect edition.

Will We Be Happy in Heaven?

To a preacher and the song leader of a congregation, football was their second religion. When they were not playing it they were talking about it or attending a game or watch it on television or coaching a pee wee team. One day over coffee the song leader said, "Preacher, I don't think I'll be very happy in heaven if they do not have football in Heaven." "Well, the preacher replied, "I'll have to agree with you. So I'll tell you what who ever dies first should send word back to the other whether there is football in Heaven." Shortly after this agreement the preacher died of a heart attack watch a game on TV. As soon as the song leader return from the preacher's funeral the phone rang. It was the preacher's voice saying, "Now don't freak out, its me. I've got some good news and some bad. First, the good news. They have football in heaven! The bad news is you are scheduled to play quarterback in Sunday's game."

If Heaven is a wonderful place, does it have everything needed to make you happy throughout eternity? In the U.S. Catholic Magazine some people were asked what they wanted in heaven. A woman in Fresno, Calif. wanted "an unlimited charge card." A Maryland woman wanted "all the chocolate she could eat". A man in Swanton, Ohio wanted to play golf every day. According to the Koran of Islam when a man dies and goes to Paradise he will have a 300 course meal, the health and strength of youth, a palace with 80,000 servants and 72 beautiful virgin wives who can have babies at will. This children will reach full manhood in one hour allowing you to skip being father to those terrible twos and turbulent teens. Is this what the after life is all about? Happiness here is self-centered, self-indulgence?

Whether or not you will be happy in heaven I cannot tell. I can tell you who will not be happy in Heaven. Have you ever heard the legend of the swan and the crane. A beautiful swan alighted by the banks of the water in which a crane was wading about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in stupid wonder and then inquired: where do you come from?" "I come from Heaven" replied the swan. "And where is heaven?" asked the crane. "Heaven!" said the swan, "Heaven! have you never heard of heaven?" And the beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the Eternal City. She told of streets of gold, and the gates and walls made of precious stones; of the river of life, pure as crystal, upon whose banks is the tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. In eloquent terms the swan sought to describe the hosts who live in the other world, but without arousing the slightest interest on the part of the crane. Finally the crane asked: "Are there any snails there?" "Snails!" repeated the swan; "No! Of course there are not." "Then," said the crane, as it continued its search along the slimy banks of the pool, "you can have your heaven. I want snails!"

People like this crane will not be happy in Heaven. Those who have the "What's in it for me?" attitude do not find Heaven appealing. If they do not have your favorite desert in Heaven you can still be happy there. If we will simply trust the Lord to do what is right. He will give us far more than we could either deserve or ever imagine.

Those who are bored with God, will not like Heaven. It is a question of love. We are interested in the things we love. If a person doesn't love the Lord enough to go to church, he doesn't love Him enough

to go to heaven. He wouldn't fit in there. If you are in love with this world the idea of heaven is boring. Many would like to be the rich man on earth and Lazarus in Heaven. Still others want to be both the rich man on earth and in Heaven.

Yes, the pure in heart will see God, but the worldly minded will not. Everyone wants to go to heaven when they died, but every day they spend every thought and action as if they only mind earthly things. Only those who can set their affections on things above will be happy when they get to Heaven.

If we live faithfully until death we will live in glory, by and by. We shall appear with Christ in glory (Col 3:4). We will be glorified together (Rom 8:17). How can anyone keep from being happy in the glory of Heaven. Someone was asked what he would do when he got to heaven. "The first millions years I will just walk around with a big grin on my face."

The real questions about Heaven is not will we know each other, how big is it or what kind of body will be have. The real questions have to do with our attitude toward the main Resident of Heaven - God. God is not going to be inviting complete strangers to come and live with Him in His house. Do you really want to spend eternity with the Creator and Father of your soul? Do you really think eternity in Heaven is worth the effort of several decades of services to Him on earth? Once you have answered these you will be ready to receive the answers to all other questions about Heaven.

Is Heaven Big Enough?

A man remarked to a preacher that he was not going to go to heaven. He had calculated that the New Jerusalem was only 1,500 miles long and 1,500 miles wide and therefore it was probably too crowded for him to go. The preacher replied, "True, Heaven is 1,500 miles long and 1,500 miles wide, However it is also, 1,500 miles high. " It will be 2,250,000 square miles. If we take that 1500 mile figure literally (though it may not be), heaven could be composed of 396,000 stories (at 20 feet per story). If you cube it, about 512 quintillion cubic feet.

Revelation 21:16 reads, *"And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal."* Someone has given us a curious calculation based on this verse.

Twelve thousand furlongs, 7,920,000 feet which being cubed, 496,793,088,000,000,000 cubic feet. Half of this we will reserve for the throne of God and the court of heaven, and half of the balance for streets, leaving a remainder of 124,198,272,000,000,000 cubic feet. Divide this by 4,096, the cubical feet in a room sixteen feet square, and there will be 30,321,843,750,000,000 rooms. We will now suppose that the world always did and always will contain 990,000,000,000 inhabitants, and that a generation lasts for 33 1/3 years, making in all 2,970,000,000 every century, and that the world will stand 100,000 years or 1,000 centuries, making in all 2,910,000,000,000 inhabitants. Then suppose there were one hundred worlds equal to this in number of inhabitants and duration of years, making a total of 297,000,000,000,000 persons, and there would be more than a hundred rooms sixteen feet square for each person.

Heaven will not be crowded there are many rooms in God's Heavenly Home. Yes, Heaven is big enough. Big enough for you, your family and all those you can bring with you. Just remember though, heaven is a spiritual realm for spiritual beings, so size is not the real issue.

Questions:

1. Why do some reject the idea of knowing each other in Heaven?
2. What does the phrase, *"gathered to his people,"* imply?

3. In Jesus' parable of the rich man and the beggar, who recognized whom?
4. At the Mount of Transfiguration who all did Peter recognize?
5. Did King David ever hope to be with his dead infant son again?
6. Why was the witch of Endor so surprised?
7. In death was the King of Babylon and Pharaoh ever recognized by the dead according to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 32:17-32?
8. What will the saints new resurrected body be like?
9. Will we grow old in Heaven? Explain.
10. Will there being anyone in Heaven who does not want to be there? Explain
11. Is Heaven big enough? Explain.

Application & Discussion:

1. What can one do on earth in this life to prepare him to be happy in Heaven?
2. What other questions do you have about Heaven?

Homework: Make a list of people who if they miss heaven would make Heaven a miserable place for you. Next start inviting them to go to Heaven with you.

Nobody Should Desire Hell

Do You Believe in Hell?

According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life their U.S. Religious Landscape Survey found that only 59% of the total population in America believe in Hell. Among the various religious groups belief in hell among Protestants is at 73% and Catholics at 60%. The Mormons agree with the nation with 59% believing in Hell while only 9% of the Jehovah's Witnesses think Hell is a real place of eternal punishment. The largest percentage of believers in hell among the world religions are the Muslims (80%). The other world religions, such as, Hindu (35%); Buddhist (26%); and Jewish (22%) greatly disagree with Islam. What is really astonishing is that ten percent of Atheists believe in hell.

Information provided by The Association of Religion Data Archives found that those over seventy-five were absolutely sure not hell existed. The discovered education plays a major role in belief in hell the higher the education the more likely they are to reject belief in hell. Men (57.9%) are more likely to believe in hell than women (47.5%). Believe or not political party affiliation makes a difference in ones believe in an eternal hell. Only 43.1% of Democrats believe in hell compared to 68.8% of Republicans. Those who consider themselves Independents are even less likely to believe in hell (40.4%) than Democrats. Regular church attendance has more to do with believe in Hell than any other factor. Thirty percent of those who never attend church services are absolutely sure there is not hell. Compare this to the mere 1.5% of those who attend weekly or more reject the idea of hell. Of those who have a firm belief in the existence of hell they attend weekly services and 85.3% affirm their belief in hell.

Why do so many reject the idea of a literal place called hell where God will punish the wicked? One of the reasons has to do with the theology of particular denominations. The Mormons believe in hell but no one but those guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit are going to spend time there. Their founder, Joseph Smith, declared, "You cannot save such persons; you cannot bring them to repentance" (TPJS, p. 358). In one of their so-called inspired writings they give further explanation. "Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame. These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels—And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power; Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath" (Doctrine and Covenant 76)

Many Catholics believe in hell but consider purgatory to be the place where most sinners will spend time "burning off" their sins so they will merit a place in heaven.

Another factor in determining one's beliefs about the afterlife have to do with one's view of the punishment of evil and the problem of a just and loving God punishing sinners with eternal fire. Those who hate and abhor evil and see a need for justice against them are more likely to accept the concept of hell while those who cannot seem to reconcile their view of God with an hell tend to reject the reality of eternal punishment. Many of the more liberal denominations reject for these reasons. The United Church of Christ states that "many members do not believe in specific places of reward or punishment, but do believe God gives believers eternal life."

The reason most New Testament Christians believe in a place of everlasting punishment for the wicked souls of judged men is because of statements found in the inspired writings of the New Testament.

Jesus believed in Hell. Despite the fact that more people believe in the existence of Heaven versus the percentage who believe in Hell, Jesus spoke more on Hell than Heaven.

- Matthew 5:30 - *And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more*

- *profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Matthew 10:28 - 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 18:9 - 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 23:15 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.*

The brother of Jesus believed in Hell. *"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell"* (James 3:6).

The apostle Peter believed in Hell. *"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment"* (2 Peter 2:4).

In his Revelation the apostle John believed in Hell as a place of punishment in a lake of fire called "the second death."

- *Revelation 2:11 - He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.*
- *Revelation 20:6 - 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.*
- *Revelation 20:14 - Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*
- *Revelation 21:8 - 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.*

Do you believe in Hell? The answer to that question may well help to determine where you spend eternity.

Packing Tips For Hell

We are all acquainted with losing something. Loss brings disappointment because we miss it. We miss an appointment, phone call, plane, favorite TV show, etc. and feel a sense of loss. Yet, we hope to make up for these losses. All losses are not easy to make up, for example, the tax deadline on April 15th or a court appointment. Even worse, what if you miss heaven? Well, then, you have missed all there is and lost all there will ever be.

Most people miss things because they fail to make proper preparations. No one plans to miss Heaven, but they will because they failed to plan. In a sense, if you do not plan to go to Heaven you are planning not to go, or you are in effect planning to go to Hell.

The Bible makes it clear that some will miss Heaven. Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21). Those who refuse to obey God have no hope of Heaven in contrast with those who keep God's commandments. *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22:14).

When you plan to go somewhere you start packing suitable items for the trip. If you are packing for the trip to Heaven there are some things you will need and some things you will not need. However, if you are not planning on going to Heaven then you might want to get packing for Hell.

First, bring a powerful flashlight. The wicked are known to love darkness on this side of the grave (John 3:17-21), but they are really going to experience blackness of darkness forever in Hell: *"raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"* (Jude 13). The preaching of the apostles was to *"call men out of darkness, into his marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9), delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into Christ's kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Yet if you love the darkness in life you will never see the light of

Heaven in death.

Hell is described as *“a lake of fire”* (Rev. 20:15). So, you might want to bring a fire proof boat.

Although there may be a lake, there will be no water. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the rich man could not find even a drop of water for relief. So he called to Abraham, *“Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”* (Luke 16:24). Better bring a tanker of water.

In the parable of the talents the one talent man who neglected to prepare for the master’s return was cast out into the outer darkness where *“there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt. 25:30). The term “gnash” means “to grind the teeth together” according to Webster. The gnashing and biting of a wounded animal. If you value your teeth it sounds like you need to bring a mouth guard.

Go ahead and pack plenty of pain reliever. The punishment of Hell is so painful that it would be better to lose a hand or pluck out an eye too, than for the whole body to be cast into Hell (Matt. 5:29,30). Of the wicked, Jesus said, *“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”* (Matt. 25:46).

Next to pain reliever bring a lot of first aid cream. Hell is a place where there will be burning (Matt. 13:40).

Since there will be a great deal of pain in Hell you can also expect weeping (Matt. 25:30). Vine’s says that weeping is “any loud expression of grief.” It would be wise to pack a good pair of ear plugs.

While at the drug store you want to pick up a big bottle of sleeping pills. Hell is a place where there is no rest. The wicked *“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”* (Rev. 14:10,11).

Finally, bring your regrets. The rich man regretted that he could not warn his brothers about the place of torment (Lk. 16:27,28). You may spend eternity regretting that you never stepped out into the aisle at church to be baptized into Christ during the invitation song, or all the times you neglected to come forward in repentance, confessing your sins. Life is filled with so many regrets why would anyone want to pack them for eternity?

The good news in Christ is that you do not have to pack any of these things to prepare for your trip to Heaven. No aspirin or ear plugs are needed because in heaven God will wipe away all tears, and we will sing songs of praise to God with the saints of all ages. Forget about towing a fire proof boat or hauling water, because the river of life flows with the water of life from the throne of God. Heaven will be a place of rest, so leave the sleeping pills behind. Do not bother packing a flashlight because God is the light of heaven, and there is no night there. When you arrive at the gates of Heaven you will leave all your regrets behind. So, instead of packing for Hell, you better get packing for Heaven, today!

Questions:

1. Why do so many reject the idea of a literal place called hell where God will punish the wicked?
2. Show from the scriptures that Jesus believe in Hell?
3. List others in the Bible who obviously believed in Hell?
4. Why will many miss going to Heaven?

5. What is the one thing the rich man requested of Abraham? Why?

6. Matching: Packing for Hell

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| _____ Flashlight | a. failure to warn others about this place |
| _____ Fireproof Boat | b. torment in the flame |
| _____ Pain reliever | c. weeping |
| _____ Sleeping Pills | d. blackness of darkness |
| _____ Regrets | e. no rest |
| _____ Tissue | f. lake of fire |

Application & Discussion:

1. Do you believe in Hell? Why?
2. If God is Love, why does He damn anyone to Hell? Would it not be the loving thing to do to just let everyone into Heaven? Explain.

Homework: Find someone this week who does not believe in Hell or is heading there and encourage them to start avoiding it.

Will Hell Ever Freeze Over?

People will use various idiomatic phrases to describe an impossible or very unlikely situation or event. One such phrase is, "When (or until) hell freezes over." This speaks to the fact that the fires of hell will endure forever. However, there is one place where you could not use this phrase. Every winter Hell, Michigan does freeze over. However, if global warming continues as predicated this may not be true much longer.

Have you ever heard an individual remark after enduring a long sermon, "I thought I'd die before we got out of church. The preacher went on preaching for eternity!" It is difficult for our time bound minds to truly understand the concept of eternity. Eternal punishment is even more difficult for the human mind to fathom. In reality, hell has no space and time such as we are bound to in this world. That fiery realm is spaceless and timeless, or the opposite of space and of time, both of which are wholly inconceivable to us in our present state.

Meaning of Eternity

The word "everlasting" comes from the Greek word "aionios". It means "without beginning or end, that which always has been and always will be" (Thayer's p. 20). The term is used to refer to: Hell; God (Rom. 16:26); His power (1 Tim. 6:16); His glory (1 Pet. 5:10); the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14); redemption is affected by Christ (Heb. 9:12); consequent salvation of men (Heb. 5:9); God's rule (2 Pet. 11); etc. Thus, hell is just as everlasting as God, the Holy Spirit, etc.

Some teach that "eternity" means only "age-lasting." The word "eternal" may denote "age-lasting," that is, so long as an age endures, whether of man, a dispensation or time. When it pertains to the age beyond the judgment and the passing of this present order of time, it has the literal meaning of eternal or never-ending. The present age (this world) is always contrasted with the age to come as temporal, while the future age is to be endless. Is heaven just age-lasting? (Mt. 25:46). Is God just age-lasting? (Rom. 16:26). If God had intended to say the wicked will be punished eternally, what words would He have used to describe it? They make it impossible to convey the idea in human language.

In Matthew 25:46 Jesus used the same Greek word in the same sentence to describe eternal life and to describe eternal punishment. Jesus said, *"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* The longevity of Heaven stands or falls alongside the longevity of Hell; if one will eventually end, so will the other. Any argument that will shorten the time in one will do so in the other. Thus, we must either admit the endless wretchedness of hell or give up the endless happiness of heaven. It is curious that there is no dispute over the duration of heaven. All understand the meaning of "eternal" when applied to heaven. Why would the meaning automatically change when applied to hell?

Consider the fact that there will be eternal day in heaven and eternal night in hell. The righteous (before the throne of God) *"serve him day and night"* (Rev. 7:14,15). The wicked (who worship the beast) *"...have no rest day and night"* (Rev. 14:11). Of heaven it is said, "there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25). Hell is darkness of night. Thus, when the day ends in heaven, the continuous torture in hell will cease.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "I have met no people who fully disbelieve in Hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in heaven."

Descriptions of Eternal Punishment

A couple of descriptions of hell denote its eternal duration. First, hell is described as an unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:48). As the bush burned before Moses and yet was not annihilated (Ex. 3:2) so are the fires of Hell. To say that Hell shall end is to say its fire shall be quenched. The second phrase

denoting the duration of Hell is, *"Worm dieth not"* (Mk. 9:48, KJV). It is a figure borrowed from the city dump of Jerusalem, where maggots were forever feasting on rotting corpses. The undying worm everlastingly consuming and never consumed.

Arguments Against an Eternal Hell

Some will argue that an eternal Hell is contrary to the nature of a just God. It is argued God would be unjust to punish men eternally for sins committed over a few decades. Yet, man is too sinful or foolish to see His justice. *"Who hath known the mind of God or who hath been His counselor?"* (Rom. 11:34). The principles of good and evil are eternal. Justice requires eternal happiness as a reward for good. The punishment for evil is eternal misery. Nothing short of this will appease Divine Justice. God is not saving Hell to spring on us as a surprise on Judgment Day. Man has been thoroughly and lovingly warned (Lk. 12:4,5). No one will go there by accident. They fail to realize that there are many things we do not want, but that justice nevertheless demands. In 2 Peter 3:9, God is not willing that any should perish, but verse ten says many will perish.

Punishment reinforces the justice of God, it does not violate His justice. In Psalm 50, God speaks to the wicked (those guilty of stealing, adultery, slander, deceit) and says in verse twenty-one, *"These things you have done, and I kept silence: You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you, and state the case in order before your eyes."* Because God had not immediately punished their wickedness, the transgressors assumed that He was just like them; no holier, no purer, and just as indifferent to sin. Adam and Eve knew that it would be possible to hide from one another in the garden, so they thought they could hide from God (Gen. 3:10). Ananias and Sapphira knew that it was possible to lie to men, so they thought they could lie to God (Acts 5). God is not slack concerning His promise as men are (2 Pet. 3:9).

Critics of an eternal Hell argue, "Eternity is too long to punish the wicked. It is unjust to punish a man eternally for sins committed in so short of time." Can one really envision a judge sentencing a thief to prison for a period of time not to surpass the number of minutes it took him to steal? Does anyone sincerely think it violates justice to sentence a murderer to a prison stretch measured in years when the murder was committed in a matter of minutes? The fact is the time it takes to commit a crime has nothing to do with determining the duration of punishment. Our system of law demands that the criminal be punished in relationship to the magnitude of the crime committed, and not the amount of time it took to perpetrate the crime. Remember, the greatest crime is spurning the greatest gift God has ever given man, that is, eternal life through the sacrifice of Christ. How long should one suffer for this is ingratitude.

Some argue, "No human parent would inflict such a punishment upon his child for a crime." Neither would we punish a child as severe as nature will. (Examples: Drugs, fingers in wall plugs, drinking and driving, etc.) A teenager drinks too much at a party, drives his car into the headlights of a semi-trailer and is a paraplegic for life. A few moments of promiscuity can cause some dreaded disease to begin its awful spread. Actions often have outcomes that go far beyond their immediate cause. If they had the power to prevent it, how many human fathers would allow their children to be born horribly deformed? God who has such power, does allow these things to happen to His creatures. God even permits such things to happen to some of the most godly of saints. Our point is: what God will allow to happen cannot be determined on the basis of what finite and time-bound creatures, such as you and I, would permit to happen.

Sinful creatures like ourselves are not capable of estimating how horrendous sin really is. Should lawbreakers be permitted to be the lawmakers? Do murderers serve as defense witnesses, sit on the jury, and wear judge's robes in determining the sentence of one who has harmed another? Then why should the sinner be so bold as to question the penalty for sin. Esau in a moment of hunger sold his birthright for some pottage, but the loss was irrevocable and it was for life? Can one estimate the lasting effects of World War II which was the doing of Hitler? How are the evils of Hitler measured? How long will he deserve to be in Hell? Hell is eternal because the consequences of sin are never temporary.

If Hell endured a million years a soul could stand it. After all, after spending one day there he could reason that he only had 999,999 years and 364 days left. Those who rejected the God of Heaven could hope for day Hell would end. Hell does not last a thousand years. Instead it lasts forever and forever and forever. Hell is a place where men live (or die) forever.

Questions:

1. Define "eternity" in your own words.
2. What things in the Bible are said to be eternal?
3. Heaven will be an eternal day, while Hell is an eternal _____.
4. Give the scripture where Jesus explains that punishment in Hell is be just as long as the saint's life in Heaven with God.
5. What will Hell be like?
6. Is an eternal Hell contrary to the nature of God? Explain.
7. Does justice demand the same length of punishment based on the time it took to commit the crime or sin? Explain.
8. Will God inflict unjust punishments upon anyone?

Application & Discussion:

1. What do you personally think is the worst part about eternal punishment in Hell?
2. How would you go about teaching someone that Hell is real and really forever?

Homework: Remember this week that no one has ever earned the right to go to Heaven. God will still be just if he sent us to hell the very first time we sinned. If you avoid the fires of Hell it will only be by the grace of God.

Eternal Life Insurance/Assurance Policy

You most likely have auto insurance to protect you and others from loss in the event you are involved in a traffic accident. Perhaps, you have fire or flood or comprehensive home owner's or renter's insurance to protect your home and belongings. Your place of employment may provide you with health insurance to help cover the costs for illness. Some companies offer burial insurance. Most people think it wise to have life insurance to pay off their home and provide for loved ones in the event of death. Have you considered obtaining an Eternal Life Insurance policy?

You Need This Policy

Salesmen have done all sorts of odd stunts to get prospective clients to buy life insurance, such as, backing up a hearse to the front door and asking the fathers if their families can afford for them to take this ride. Every mature living soul needs an Eternal Life Insurance policy to assure their destiny beyond the grave. Why? You need Eternal Life Insurance because *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23a) and *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23), *"but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23b). Unlike mere life insurance which benefits others in the event of your death, this policy allows you to be the beneficiary. This is even better than fire insurance because it can allow you to escape the fires of hell, which is called the "second death."

A wise man once asked, *"if a man dies, shall he live again?"* (Job 14:14). Yes, there is life after death. The Founder and Head of the company has died and seen the other side. He returned to this side of death having resurrected from the dead to assure you that it is possible to have eternal life. You need this policy because this short life on earth is not all there is.

You also need this policy because eternity is a very long time. The word "eternal" comes from the Greek word "ainonios," which means, "everlasting, without end, never to cease, or indeterminate as to duration." Try and measure the length of eternity in your mind. The last verse of the hymn, *Amazing Grace* reads: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun." If an ant could walk on the equator traveling at the rate of one-seventeenth of a mile an hour and wear the earth in half, how many years would it take? However long it might take would not represent even one day of eternity. Again, suppose the entire state of Texas were made of wood. How long would it take a termite to eat the entire state? However long it might take would not represent even one second of eternity. We are finite beings limited by time and subject to the limitations of space. This restricts our ability to comprehend life without time - eternal life. Yet, you still should be able to understand that your future in eternity is worth protecting with this policy.

You cannot afford to die without Eternal Life Insurance. If you die without this policy *"how can you escape the condemnation of hell?"* (Mt. 23:33). Those who do die without this policy *"will go away into everlasting punishment"* (Mt. 25:46). However, those who have this policy *"shall not be hurt by the second death"* (Rev. 2:11).

Your Policy Will Provide You with Protection

Your Eternal Life Insurance Policy will protect you from *"flaming fire"* and the Divine *"vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thess. 1:8) and from *"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Furthermore, this policy can protect you from *"the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (Rev. 20:8b). If you have this policy you will be able to rest easy without fearing *"Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matt. 10:28). These represent just a few of the protections provided you by this policy.

Some Essential Facts about the Company

The founder of this Eternal Life Insurance Company is none other than Jesus *"the Christ, the Son*

of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) who built His church upon that fact (Matt. 16:18). It is the only one He built. This Divine company was founded at Jerusalem in about A.D. 30 (Acts 2:1,16,47) making it the oldest and sole provider of this policy (Eph. 5:23b). Its home office and headquarters is located in heaven where Jesus is currently serving as the Head of the company (Col. 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). Branch offices (or congregations) can be found located in principal cities and even small communities all over the world. They are known as *"churches of Christ"* (Romans 16:16). The rate book used is the Bible. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The authority for offering this policy resides in Christ from God (Matthew 28:18).

You will be happy to learn that the company's present standing is excellent. The company's capital consist of *"the unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:8). The security and assurance of your benefits are *"incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Peter 1:4). The reason for this is the great surplus is *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Ephesians 3:20). Yet at the same time this company accepts all liabilities (John 6:27). To top it all off in dividends you *"receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life"* (Mark 10:30).

Cost of this Policy

Unlike regular life insurance policies this policy is free. It has already been paid for. It is a free gift from God through the sacrifice of His Son (Romans 6:23). There is nothing you can do to purchase or earn the benefits of this policy.

Application for this Policy

Although this policy is free. It can only be obtained by you (the sinner) by making a personal application for this policy. The first condition: you must *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31). Second, you must repent or turn away from your life of sin and turn back toward God (Acts 2:38). Next, this policy can only be obtained *"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Romans 10:9,10). Finally, this policy is given at the moment you are baptized to wash away your sin (Acts 22:16). Jesus has promised, *"he who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

Maintaining the Policy

Once the conditions of the application by you (the sinner) has been met, the policy will become effective. There will be no monthly or annual premiums paid by you. Jesus paid it all. However, this policy will only remain in effect so long as certain conditions are maintained. It is possible to lose your Eternal Life Insurance policy (Gal. 5:4). You must continue *"steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). And you must not forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another"* (Hebrews 10:25). You must *"be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58). It is also necessary *"to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (James 1:27). Finally, *"be faithful until death"* (Revelation 2:10) and you will receive the full benefits of this Eternal Life Insurance policy.

Special Policy Provisions and Benefits

This policy gives you benefits from the start. The immediate benefits are *"forgiveness of sins"* (Eph. 1:7). Furthermore, the moment you are saved from your sins God adds you to His company (the church) (Acts 2:47). From the first day you *"have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1,2). You also have fellowship with God the Father, Christ His Son, and the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14). And you *"have become heirs according to the hope of eternal life"* (Tit. 3:7).

Not Covered in this Policy

This policy is not for everyone. Some, due to their life choices, have been excluded from this policy unless they change their condition. People who will not hear Christ will not receive an Eternal Life Insurance policy (Acts 3:23). Those who will not believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Jn. 8:24; Mk. 16:16) or repent of their sins (Lk. 13:3; Ac. 17:30) cannot obtain a policy. Those who will only meet the first condition of the application (believe) will not be given this policy. *"You see then that a man is justified*

by works, and not by faith only. ...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:24,26). This exclusion also applies to those who will not confess Christ publically (Matthew 10:31,32). Those who attempt to earn eternal life by following the Law of Moses will not be issued a valid policy. *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace"* (Gal. 5:4). *"The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall"* not receive an Eternal Life policy (Revelation 20:8). Believe it not, this policy will not even be issue to the one who hates his brother. *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"* (1 John 3:15).

This Policy Is a Limited Time Offer

This offer may end without any prior notice. This is not some lame sales pressure tactic. You can die at any moment without a policy. Christ may return unannounced catching you without an Etemal Life Insurance policy. Time is running out on this offer of a lifetime. *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2). If you do not have an Eternal Life Insurance policy contact one of Christ's representatives immediately. If you already have an Eternal Life Insurance policy check to see if you have properly maintained it. Let us know if we can help you get your policy up to date.

Eternal Life Assurance

While it is true God's children need to do what they can to insure that one day they will live forever, it is also true that in a sense saints currently possess eternal life. It is true there is quite a few Biblical scholars who hold that eternal life is not a present gift which a Christian possess in this temporal life, but only a future reward promised to those who remain faithful until death is this life. They will appeal to many passages in the New Testament which clearly show eternal life to be a promise rewarded in the future (Mark 10:30; Romans 6:22; 2 Tim. 4:3-8; Tit. 1:2; 1 John 2:25; Rev. 2:10; etc). However, to be fair to the Word of God there are several passages, mostly from the apostle John, which clearly demonstrate that eternal life is not just a future reward but a gift possessed by faithful saints in the present life.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (John 5:24)

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.(John 6:54)

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (1 John 5:11)

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.(1 John 5:13)

Therefore, eternal life is also a gift given to the faithful saints while they are still alive on earth. The point of this gift of eternal life is the assurance it gives to the believer and the sense of responsibility they have in hanging onto this Divine gift when this life in over. In a way the assurance of life eternal motivates the Christian to live so as to insure he has eternal life.

Conclusion

A Biblical metaphor used to reference the idea of eternal life is the tree of life. What is the Tree of Life? *"The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"* (Gen. 2:9). *"Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'-- therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life"* (Gen. 3:22-24). *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city"*(Rev. 22:14). The other questions can be answered from the verses quoted above. Does it still exist?

YES. Where is it now? It is in Heaven. Can we have access to it? Yes, but only after Judgment Day. How do we gain access to it? By doing His commandments. Will you partake of the Tree of Life and live forever?

Questions:

1. Why does everyone need eternal life insurance?
2. Can time bound and space bound man truly compared eternity? Explain.
3. From what will having eternal life protect someone?
4. Can a sinner truly hope to have eternal life without being a part of the church for which Christ died? Explain.
5. What does eternal life cost? Why?
6. What must one do to obtain eternal life?
7. What must one do to maintain eternal life?
8. Can a Christian lose their hope of eternal life? Explain.
9. When will the opportunity to obtain eternal come to an end?

10. Show from the scriptures that eternal life is a reward for the faithful promised to them in the future.
11. Show from the scriptures that eternal life is a gift which has been given to them in the present.

Application & Discussion:

1. What role does the Tree of Life play in the beginning of Genesis and the end of Revelation? What does this have to do with eternal life?
2. What other metaphors does the Bible use to describe the nature of eternal life?

Homework: Take comfort in the fact you have currently have eternal life as a faithful Christian.

False Doctrines Concerning the Afterlife

There are a myriad of false teachings about the afterlife. All of which rob man of the true hope offered by the Truth which declares everyone has the opportunity to have eternal life. In this lesson we will explore just a few of these more prominent beliefs.

Soul Sleep

Perhaps the greatest concerning the living saints in Thessalonica was *"concerning those who have fallen asleep"* (1 Th. 4:13b). *"Asleep"* is in reference to the death of the saints. Jesus used it in reference to the death of Jarius' daughter (Matt. 9:24) as well as for His friend Lazarus (Jn. 11:11-13). The same phrase is used in conjunction with the martyrdom of Stephen. Pagans of the time even used "sleep" as a metaphor for "death." In contrast, the New Testament writers never speak of a non-believer's death as a "sleep."

What Paul is saying here should not be taken as proof for the doctrine of soul sleep held by the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventists. This false concept of death holds that when a person dies his soul is in a state or condition of unconsciousness and will not be aware of anything until the future resurrection of the dead. Paul did not say that the soul went to sleep at death. Paul taught the Philippians that death is being with Christ (Phil. 1:23). He wrote, *"we are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord"* (2 Cor. 5:8).

Reincarnation

What is reincarnation? It is also called transmigration of souls. In short, it means that the human soul moves into a different bodily form after death. This transfer of spirit can be either into another human, animal or even vegetable.

Reincarnation is an integral doctrine of many eastern religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is tied to its own concept of works (karma) and its own concept of salvation (nirvana).

"The doctrine of karma teaches that each soul is working its way to perfection by overcoming imperfections in previous lives. Based upon the clearly accurate observation that no one in this present life is perfect, it is correctly assumed that a person cannot, on his own, reach perfection in a single lifetime. The fallacious conclusion is then drawn that it must take many lifetimes in order for each soul to achieve that goal" (F. LaGard Smith, *Out on a Broken Limb*, p. 71). "So long, therefore, as the soul has not attained the condition of purity, it must be born again after the dissolution of the body to which it was allied; and the degree of its impurity at one of these various deaths determines the existence which it will assume in a subsequent life" (McClintock and Strong 525). Karma teaches: 1) the soul can evolve upward toward perfection until it finally reaches Nirvana (the merging of the soul with the universal soul or universe). 2) This soul can evolve downward. This has led to basis for the Hindu caste system.

Reincarnation is totally incompatible with Bible teaching. First, the soul of man was created by God. Only man has a soul (Gen. 1:26). Man has but one life to live (Eccl. 12:7; Lk. 16:26; 2 Cor. 5:1,4). He has been given but one body to house his soul (2 Cor. 12:2,3; 2 Pet. 1:13,14). Man only dies once (Heb. 9:27). The souls of men await in Hades for the resurrection and judgment (Lk. 23:46; Ac. 2:27). At the Second Coming both soul and body will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:42-44). Heaven is nothing like Nirvana where one's soul becomes one with the universal soul, Brahma. In Heaven individual souls remember and continue their existence (Phil. 3:21). Foremost of all, reincarnation does not have a concept of forgiveness by grace. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"* (Eph. 2:8,9).

In recent years due to the New Age Movement there has been a resurrection of reincarnation in

connection to progressive denominations of Christianity. Some have gone so far as to find proof of the doctrine of reincarnation within the pages of the Bible (Psalm 49:15; Eccl. 11:5; Rev. 2:11). However, reincarnation and karma are part of a false belief system at war with Christianity. the two cannot peacefully co-exist. Being a true Christian and accepting the theory of reincarnation is incompatible, if not impossible (Col. 2:8,18).

Annihilationism

Job asked if a man dies will he live again (14:14)? Atheists, obviously, say "No!" "There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body" (Humanist Manifesto II, p. 17). "Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful" (Ibid, p. 16). Many denominations give many different answers that are contradictory with one another and the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe the soul of man is annihilated and therefore cannot be sent to hell. The denominations founder, Charles Taze Russell, wrote, "Many have imbibed the erroneous idea that God places our race on trial for life with the alternative of eternal torture, whereas nothing of the kind is even hinted at..." (Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 1: The Divine Plan of the Ages [Bible Students Congregation of New Brunswick, 1996, a reprint of the 1886 edition], p. 127). They further believe that "eternal torture is nowhere suggested in the Old Testament Scriptures, and only a few statements in the New Testament can be so misconstrued as to appear to teach it." (The Divine Plan of the Ages, page 128). In their book, Let God Be True, they define what hell is. "The Bible hell is mankind's 'common grave'" (Let God Be True (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952), p. 92).

Universalism

The doctrine of universalism holds that every soul will be saved no matter how wicked there have been or what they believed. A loving God will never send a single soul to suffer in hell for eternity or even in purgatory temporarily. However, there are varying views on this belief. Those who hold to universalism find Biblical proof for this teaching in such passages as Acts 3:21 and Col. 1:20.

Universalism is rejected by Jesus who held that belief in Him was the only means of eternal life (John 14:6f; 3:16,36). This doctrine fails to explain why a just God will reward the wicked for eternity. Thus, it shows the life and death and resurrection of Christ to be no more than a meaningless gesture.

Purgatory

"What is purgatory" A place and state of temporary punishment after death...Who goes to purgatory? Those...1) who die while guilty of unrepented venial sins 2) who die without having done sufficient penance to pay the debt of the temporal punishment still due their past sins...Where do you go when you leave purgatory? To heaven to be with God...Can you help the souls in Purgatory? You can shorten their stay by having Masses said for them, praying for them and doing good works for them" (Catechism, 37-39). Basically, it is a place for the purging of sins so that soul can migrate in time to heaven when purification is complete (Jessie Pergis, A Practical Catholic Dictionary, 179). Purgatory is therefore a temporary state of the soul to remove venial or lesser sins. While those guilty of mortal sins such as adultery or murder do not have a chance at purification. Those in purgatory cannot help themselves, but they be aided by the faithful on earth. This can be accomplished by friends and relatives of the deceased paying for special masses with prayers offered for the dead and suffering soul in purgatory.

Although the only proof of Purgatory needed by the Catholic church is the authority of the church itself through its popes and church traditions, they do offer up passages of scriptures used to support this belief. Since they accept the Jewish apocryphal books as inspired they appeal to 2 Maccabees 12:43-46.

They even turned to other apocryphal books as evidence: Ecclesiasticus, Baruch with the Epistle of Jeremiah, The Song of Three Children, The Story of Susanna, The Idol Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, and I & II Maccabees. They also appeal to such New Testament passages as Matthew 12:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; and 2 Tim. 1:18.

The doctrine of purgatory is in direct conflict with the teaches of the Bible. One's eternal destiny is sealed at death (Lk. 16:26; Heb. 9:27). Everyone will be judged by their one deeds done while they were

alive (Ezek. 18:20; 33:12,13,18; 2 Cor. 5:10). Extra deeds of goodness do not transfer to another soul. No human has any excess good deeds beyond what he himself needs (Rom. 3:9-18,23; 1 Jn. 1:8-10; Js. 2:10; Lk. 17:10). God is not a respecter of persons by favoring the deeds and donations of the rich to shorten the time of loved one's in purgatory (Ac. 10:34; 35; Js. 2:1-9; 2 Cor. 8:12; Mk. 12:41-44). Sins are only forgiven in this life not the next (2 Tim. 1:3; Js. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Cor. 6:6 1 Tim. 4:12). It is the blood of Christ alone which purges sin from the penitent, confessing soul of a saint (1 John 1:7). Purgatory is not found in the Bible, but is an addition to God's Word (Rev. 22:18,19). Purgatory promotes moral laxity by the lost sinner and greed in the church in this life. Furthermore, "The Church does not pretend to know how much of Purgatory God remits by a partial indulgence of so many days, years, etc." (Question Box, 1913 Ed., 413). "The Catholic Church does not pretend to know anything about the duration of the suffering of Purgatory" (Ibid., 567). The goodness is there are no Catholic toll booths on the highway to heaven.

Premillennialism

Nearly seventy percent of all protestant preachers hold so some view of premillennialism. There are so many different takes on this doctrine by various denominations and even scholars within these, it is impossible to give an overview of these in this lesson. However, most believe that one day Jesus Christ will return to earth and reign in Jerusalem on the literal throne of David for one thousand years. Most premillennialists claim to know the time of Christ's return based on their various interpretations of the Bible.

One day neighbor Ishmael saw me working in my front yard and gave a hospitable wave. The return greeting I gave bought him across the street. After a few minutes of casual discourse he said, "You are a minister. Can you tell me when the Son of God is going to return?" Quickly I admitted that I had no way of knowing or figuring out from the scriptures when He will come again. Surprised he said, "But you are a pastor. You are suppose to know when Christ is coming."

At this point in the conversation I quoted Matthew 24:35: *"but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."* The truth is, if angels of God and the Son of God do know when Christ shall return how can any man lay claim to such knowledge. The day and hour of the Second Coming is known only to God the Father. This information is hidden from mere men and known only to God. *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law"* (Deut. 29:29).

However, since the time of Christ's ascension from the earth into Heaven, men have longed for His returned and have speculated concerning the exact hour and day of this final event of human history. While the church was still young, Paul the apostle wrote two letters to the church at Thessalonica to reminded them that the Lord was coming, but it may not be in the lifetime of the first-century believers. *"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape"* (1 Thess. 5:1-3). Later, some Christians regarded the year 1000 AD as the time of Christ's return. They based this on a misunderstanding of the "thousand year reign" of Christ in Revelation chapter twenty. In the 1830s William Miller made a series of failed predications regarding the end of the world. The Jehovah's Witnesses claimed that Jesus did return in secret in 1914. Space Brother Sananda maintained that the world would end on December 21, 1954. On March 26, 1997 thirty-nine bodies were discovered in San Diego. They were all part of the Heaven's Gate cult who followed Marshall Applewhite's prophesy that a UFO hidden in the passing Hale-Bopp comet would rapture them as it passed by the earth. Many argued that the Lord would return at the turn of the new millennium. However, the year 2000 has come and gone and the Y2K scare is a mere memory. More recently, Harold Camping, president of the Family Radio network, claimed the great rapture would come at six o'clock in the evening in May 21, 2011. His first attempt at determining the date of Christ's return mathematically caused him to claim September 6, 1994. He has picked October 21st is to be the final day of history. Now, if that date is too soon for you to be prepared for the end of the world then perhaps December 21, 2012 will suit your schedule better. This date is based on the ancient Mayan calendar.

What is wrong with speculating about Christ's return? What difference does it make if we have

different dates picked out for the Second Coming? Such conjectures are detrimental to the cause of Christ and damaging to the souls of men. First, it denies the plain statement of Jesus in Matthew 24:36 that only the Father knows of the day or hour of His return. If Jesus is lying about this how can He be trusted when He promises, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Second, many are tempted to twist and abuse the Scriptures in a vain attempt to prove their theories concerning the time of Christ's return. Often, difficult and figurative sections of the Bible (such as the book of Revelation) are used as proof-texts. Not only does this rob people of the true meaning of these passages it adds and subtractions from the Truth in God's Word. John warned, *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Rev 22:18,19). Furthermore, while men and women are so busy working diligently to find out when Christ is to return they will be missing out on valuable opportunities to discover and practice those commands which are actually found in the Scriptures. Next, they will not be spending time with the lost souls helping them to obey the Gospel because they are too focused on that which God has not revealed to mankind as part of the Gospel message. Finally, men and women are being convinced by false prophets that Jesus will return at (let say) midnight on December 22nd in the year 2012. The danger is they will not be watching and praying throughout the rest of 2011 and 2012 as they are commanded in Matthew 24:44: *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect"* and Matthew 25:13: *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."* When Bible students spend a great deal of time and energy searching the Scriptures for something that is not to be found in them, they are benefitting no one but the Devil. While they busy themselves in futile speculation, Christ will return and find them unprepared.

Unfortunately, my attempts to convince my neighbor that the information he was seeking could not be found in the Bible proved fruitless. He continued to argue by saying, "Come on! Are you kidding me? Surely you have an idea when Jesus is coming again?" At this point I just looked at my watch and turned to Ishmael saying, "Okay, He's coming back in about ten minutes. So I better hurry up and finish my yard work." As for my neighbor he gave me half a grin and with a puzzled look retreated back across the street. Although we have spoken since that day, he has never again questioned me about the Second Coming of Christ.

Questions:

1. What is soul sleep? Why is it unscriptural?

2. What is reincarnation? Show that it is incompatible with the Biblical teaching on the afterlife.

3. What is annihilationism? Give passages which teaching otherwise.

4. What is universalism? What passages are used to support belief in it? What passage would you use to destroy it?

5. What is purgatory and what purpose does it serve?
6. What evidence is given to support the doctrine of purgatory?
7. What does Catholicism not know about purgatory?
8. What is premillennialism?
9. Why do premillennialists strive to set a day for Christ's return?
10. List passages showing no one can predict the time of Christ's Second Coming.

Application & Discussion:

1. List a few other false doctrines about the afterlife.
2. How does not knowing the time of Christ's Return beneficial to the saints growth in faith and preparedness for the Judgment?

Homework: Find a premillennialist this week and discuss their understanding of the end times and offer them a Biblical alternative.

Revelation 20: An Overview of the Afterlife

Just what happens after death? We have explored what the Bible says, however, many ancient religions have a different take on the afterlife. The Egyptians believed that judgment would take place "in the Hall of Maat (the god of justice) by Horus (the god of the sky) and Thoth (scribe of the dead) by comparing ab (the conscience). The ritual was known as the Weighing of the Heart. Heavy hearts were swallowed by a creature with a crocodile head who was called the Devourer of Souls. The good people were led to the Happy Fields." According to the ancient Greeks the soul of the dead would cross over the river Styx with a coin for the boatman Charon. On the journey Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog, would have to be appeased with honey cake. The Underworld offered punishment for the bad and pleasure for the good in the Elysian Fields, a sunny and green paradise. On the other side of the world the Aztecs believed that "once the person had overcome the perils of the Underworld Way, the soul would arrive before Miclantecutli, where it would stay for four years. The final stage required the help of the man's dog, sacrificed at his death, to travel across the Ninefold Stream, and then hound and master, to enter the eternal house of the dead, Chicommictlan." Hinduism teaches the need for reincarnation into various bodily forms until the good and bad karma are equalized and then the soul is dissolved into the unimaginable abyss of Brahman. According to Islam one is asked three questions in the grave. If they answer correctly the grave is a place of comfort. Otherwise it is a small box of torment. Upon resurrection all will be judged according to their recorded deeds both good and bad on the Scales of Justice. If the good deeds outweigh the bad, they are sent to paradise. If not, they fall off the Bridge of Sirat into Hell. As seen previously the Catholic church believes in purgatory for souls to be purified of venial sins before going to heaven. Babies who died without being baptized by the Catholic church enter into heaven after staying in limbo for a while. For the Jehovah's Witnesses Hell does not exist. Death is annihilation. Only 144,000 go to Heaven. The rest of saved mankind will stay on a new earth forever. The Mormons believe three heavens exist. The Celestial Kingdom reserved for Mormon couples who have been married in a Mormon temple. The Terrestrial Kingdom is for "liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers." They do believe in Hell, but very few people will stay there forever.

All these man made teachings about the afterlife are in conflict with the truth found in the Bible. To outline the overall events and chronology of the afterlife we will begin at birth and continue to the very end of time when all souls are found either in Heaven or Hell.

This Life

Birth

All children are born made in the image of God with a soul and a physical body. Despite the teachings of Calvinism they are born sinless or without the guilt of Adam's original sin. Children do not inherit their father's guilt of sin. *"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself"* (Ezk. 18:20). Children are innocent. *"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven'"* (Matt. 18:14).

Sin by the Individual

At a certain age, often referred to as the "age of accountability," a child will choose to sin. This age of moral awareness differs from child to child. Eventually all will one day sin except for those who do not mentally develop beyond childhood. Paul wrote, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). As a result of their sin they are estranged or separated from the Holy God. And remain condemned due to the guilt of their own sins. Again Paul explains, *"for the wages of sin is death, but the*

gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Salvation

On the Day of Pentecost about AD 29 Peter and the rest of the apostles accused the Jews of murdering the very Son of God (Acts 2:36). Those in the crowd whose consciences were afflicted by this guilt asked what they needed to do. *"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins'"* (Acts 2:38). The remainder of the book of Acts tells various stories of others who realized they were lost in sin and what they needed to do to be saved. The plan of salvation is clearly seen when comparing these. First, one must hear the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 8:26-33; 16:31-34; Rom. 10:17). As a result of hearing the evidence some will believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 16:31-34). Upon believing they will continue the path toward salvation by repenting of their sins (Acts 2:38). Next, confession that Jesus is the Son of God and Lord is to be made unto salvation (Acts 8:26-33; Rom. 10:9,10). Finally, one is saved at the point of baptism (Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16). The Bible nowhere teaches the false doctrine of once saved always saved, so the saved must remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10).

At the point of salvation God adds souls to the church (Acts 2:47). Just as Jesus answered Nicodemus' question: *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'"* (John 3:3-5).

Death

A some point all men will die (Heb. 9:27). The body is left to decay on the earth and the soul returns to God. *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it"* (Eccl. 12:7). Those who are innocent children will go to paradise. The saint who dies will also go to Paradise. However, those who do not obey the Gospel, but instead die in their sins, will go to a place of torment.

The Afterlife

Hades

Does the soul go directly to heaven or hell upon death? The Bible says the soul first goes to God (Eccl. 12:7). When Christ died He did not go directly to heaven but to paradise. He told the thief on the cross *"assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Lk. 23:43). He did not ascend into Heaven to be with the Father until after His resurrection and ascension (John 20:17; Acts. 1:9f). Instead of being sent by God directly to Heaven or Hell, the soul of the dead is sent to the Hadean world by angels at the direction of God (Lk. 16:22). The Greek word is *hades* - the realm of the dead. The Hebrew word is *Sheol* meaning the unseen world.

The Hadean realm of the dead consist of three different sections. 1) First, there is Paradise which corresponds to Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16:22). This is a place of comfort and fellowship with Christ. 2) The second section is called tartarus which means prison. It is a place of torment in the flame of fire. The wicked are sent to this place. 3) Finally, between Paradise and tartarus is a great gulf or chasm fixed between them. It is sort of a "no man's land" where no one can cross over (Lk. 16:26).

The Thousand Years

The next part of this journey into the afterlife takes us to Revelation 20. This chapter has long been held as a proof text for the false teaching often called Premillennialism. They believe this chapter teaches one day Jesus Christ will return to earth and reign in Jerusalem on the literal throne of David for one thousand years. After which will come the battle of Armageddon, Judgment Day, and the end of time. However, this chapter does not even mention several key points of Premillennialism.

No mention of thousand year reign on earth

No mention of a bodily resurrection

No mention of the Antichrist

No mention of a literal throne of David

No mention of Jerusalem or Palestine

No mention of living saints reigning on earth
No mention of Christ on earth

To understand any passage one must interpret it in view of its context. Revelation 19 tells us what will become of the Sea Beast and the Earth Beast or false prophet. *"Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone"* (Rev. 19:20). Revelation 20 is not a chronological continuation of the events of chapter nineteen but it runs parallel to those events. It tells us what is going to happen to the Dragon *"that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years"* (Rev. 20:2). He is cast into the pit. This is different from the lake of fire he will end up in at the end of time (Rev. 20:10). As with most of the numbers and details in the book of Revelation the thousand years is not an exact literal period of time. Instead it is a large amount of time representing a full or complete period of holding Satan in chains. The idea of Satan being bound has to do with his powers being limited. Christ has resurrected. He now has the keys of Death and Hades. Satan's power has been diminished. *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Hebrews 2:14,15).

The key to understanding the thousand years is found in who is to reign with Christ during this time. *"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years ... 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"* (Rev. 20:4,5b-6). Who did John see? Those who would reign with Christ for a thousand years. Who were they? Those who were at that point reigning with Christ and would do so for the duration of a metaphorical "thousand years" They 1) were the souls of those who had been beheaded; 2) for their witness to Jesus; 3) for the word of God; 4) who had not worshiped the beast or his image; and 5) had not received His mark. In other words, dead saints in paradise were alive and reigning with Christ. John calls this *"the first resurrection"* (20:5b). The righteous dead resurrect on the other side of death into life. This relationship will continue until the time of the resurrection of all the dead at the Second Coming of Christ.

What will be the situation of those wicked dead during this "thousand years"? *"But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished"* (Rev. 20:5). This is the prison Tartarus in Hades. It is not a place of life but a place of death and separation from Christ and comfort. They did not take part in the first resurrection. Their miserable condition will continue until the time of the resurrection of all the dead at the Second Coming of Christ.

Therefore, this thousand years is not a literal period of time consisting of exactly ten centuries. The thousand years is an unspecified period of time which exists while the dead souls are in the Hadean realm. During this time and place Satan is bound, that is, he has no power or authority over death and Hades.

As a side note, there are those who hold that the first resurrection is baptism. Romans 6:3-5 is appealed to as proof. However, in this context those who take part in the first resurrection are already dead saints.

The Second Coming

When will Christ return? Premillennialist claim they can decipher this from the Bible. Yet Jesus claimed, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"* (Mt. 24:36). It will come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night or labor upon a pregnant woman (1 Th. 5:2,3).

The manner of His coming is in the clouds with His Angels (1 Thess. 4:16). He is personally coming. *"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen"* (Rev. 1:7). He will come quickly *"in the twinkling of an eye"* (1 Cor. 15:52). The dead in Christ will arise first. Those who are alive

will rise to meet the Lord in the air. After this the dead resurrected saints and the living saints meet the Lord in the air. "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth-- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:28,29). As John said concerning the wicked dead, *"the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished"* (Rev. 20:5). When Christ comes again the time in Hades will end with the resurrection of the dead and the thousand years will have ended.

For those who may still be confused by premillennialism please note that when Christ comes again He will...

Not to set up a kingdom, Mt. 16:18,28; Ac. 2.

Not to sit on David's Throne, Ac. 2:34f.

Not to restore Palestine to the Jews, Josh. 21:43-45.

Not to convert the Jews, Rom. 1:16.

Not to reign a 1,000 years, 1 Cor. 15:24-26; Jn. 18:36.

The Battle of Armageddon

A multitude of books and movies have been developed around the theme of an extinction level event. Some scientist today believe there will be such an event. It may come in the form of an huge asteroid from space or our sun going supernova or a virus causing a worldwide pandemic or an alien invasion or robots and computers taking over and eliminating or enslaving mankind. Many refer to such events as an *apocalypse*. This term come from the book of Revelation where is really means a revealing. It has come to mean any event where a catastrophic destruction effects the life of mankind upon earth. The change in meaning is due to the fact the Revelation or Apocalypse in the Bible refers to the Battle or Armageddon, the final catastrophic battle between good and evil.

Revelation 20 describes this final event in verses seven through nine: *"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."* This is not a literal battle taking place in the literal plain of Megiddo in Palestine. It is the final conflict and destruction of the wicked.

All the saints have left Paradise and Earth to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:13f). The wicked dead are resurrected to the earth with the rest of those who are alive. Satan is no longer bound. And now the Bible talks about an extinction level event for the world and even for the entire universe. It is called "The Second Coming." Paul explains this event: *"...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints"* (2 Th. 1:7-10).

What will become Satan? *"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"* (Rev. 20:10).

What will become of the earth and the rest of the universe? Peter tells us of three things said to happen when the Day of the Lord comes. *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10). First, the universe *"will pass away with a great noise."* Literally it means a crackling sound. *"When the atomic bomb was tested in the Nevada desert, more than one reporter said that the explosion gave forth 'a whirring sound,' or a 'crackling sound'"* (Wiersbe 466). Second, *"the element will melt with fervent heat."* These elements represent the substance which makes up everything in the universe, perhaps the atoms. Third, the earth all everything in it created by God or made by man will be burned up. Before creation their was nothing. After the Day

of the Lord there will be nothing. This event is described in Revelation 20:11: *"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."*

What will become of Death and Hades? Notice when Christ returns and the resurrection of the dead both righteous and wicked take place, the Hadean realm, that is, Paradise and Tartarus will be left empty. *"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. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death"* (Rev. 20:13,14).

Judgment Day

Next, comes an inescapable and certain event - Judgment Day (Heb. 9:27; Rom. 14:12; Acts 17:30,31). In John's vision of Judgment Day he saw God on *"a great white throne"* (Rev. 20:11). Those who were being judged are described as *"the dead, small and great"* (Rev. 20:12a). They were judged out of the books open before God (John 12:48). One of these books was *"the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books...and they were judged, each one according to his works"* (Rev. 20:12b,13b).

Hell

Satan will be cast into Hell (Rev. 20:10). Hell is called *"the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"* (Rev. 20:14b,15). Who's who in hell? *"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"* (Rev. 21:8).

Heaven

John describes those who are not in Heaven and identifies those who will be. *"But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life"* (Rev. 21:27).

The questions about the afterlife may be endless. The real question which needs answered for everyone is where each one of us will spend eternity?

Questions:

1. Matching the Afterlife Beliefs

_____ Egyptian	a.	Reincarnation - The dissolving of all personality into the unimaginable abyss of Brahman.
_____ Aztec	b.	Three heavens exist including Celestial Kingdom reserved for Mormon couples who have been married in a Mormon temple and Terrestrial Kingdom is for "liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers." Hell exists, but very few people will stay there forever.
_____ Catholic	c.	The judgment in the Hall of Maat by Horus and Thoth by comparing ab (the conscience). The ritual was known as the Weighing of the Heart. Heavy hearts were swallowed by a creature with a crocodile head who was called the Devourer of Souls. The good people were led to the Happy Fields.
_____ Mormon	d.	"There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body"
_____ Hindu	e.	Purgatory For babies who died unbaptized, they entered heaven after staying in limbo for a while. Heaven and Hell
_____ Islam	f.	Crossing the river Styx with a coin for the boatman Charon. Cereberus, the three-headed guard dog, would have to be appeased with honeycake. The Underworld offered punishment for the bad and pleasure for the good. the Elysian Fields, a sunny and green paradise.
_____ Ancient Greece	g.	Hell does not exist. Death is annihilation. 144,000 go to Heaven. The rest stay on a new earth forever
_____ Jehovah's Witness	h.	Three Questions in Grave. Resurrection. Scales of Justice. Bridge of Sirat. Hell for those who Fall
_____ Humanism/Atheist	i.	An eternal house of the dead, Chicomeictlan.

What Happens After Death?

