

HEAVEN & HELL

Discipleship II - Chapter 7

HEAVEN AND HELL

Stop the average American on the street and ask him whether he prefers to enter heaven or hell at the moment of his death, and he will most probably opt for heaven. Yet, few people have a clear concept of the realities of heaven and hell. Heaven, they assume, is a place of great beauty and peace. Hell, on the other hand, is a place of horror and pain.

The Bible says much about heaven and hell. In fact, heaven is one of the broadest topics in the entire Bible.

It will be the purpose of this study to examine heaven and hell so your concept of these eternal habitation will be based on the Bible. Let's begin by focusing on the Bible's teaching on hell.

HELL

I will never forget the time a man in New Hampshire told me that his ultimate desire was to "go to hell with all his buddies." This man's understanding of hell was not Biblically formulated. He did not truly understand the literal hell.

There are many objections to the concept of a literal hell. Most objections are based upon the argument that a loving and gracious God could not possibly condemn men to eternal torment.

Men have devised several solutions to the "problem" of an eternal hell. These solutions include: (1) the annihilation theory (men cease to exist at death), and (2) the purgatory theory (men pay a penalty for a temporary period and are then allowed to enter heaven).

Against the opinion of man stands the clear teaching of the Word of God. The word hell occurs 54 times in 54 verses of the Bible. There are 162 New Testament texts which speak of the doom of the lost. Jesus Christ himself spoke of this horrible place over 70 times.

Let's examine four questions about hell. (1) What is hell? (2) What is hell like? (3) How long will hell endure? (4) Are there degrees of hell?

Hell's Definition

In essence, hell may be defined as "the physical and emotional separation of the soul from all that is good" (II Thessalonians 1:9). As sin leads a man's physical body to destruction, it also condemns his soul to the same fate.

Hell's Description

The New Hampshire man's response to my question demonstrated that he had no idea of the pictures that the Bible presents of hell. The description of hell seen in the Bible is an image of horror. Before we consider these pictures, however, it is well for us to remember that hell was not initially prepared by God for man. God made hell for Satan and the fallen angels (Matt. 25:41). Man by his disobedience and rejection of Christ chooses to accompany Lucifer in his eternal torment.

1. Hell is a place of physical suffering. Physicians say that burn victims endure the most excruciating of pains. This suffering is experienced by every inhabitant of hell. Hell is a place of unquenched fire (Matt. 3:12; 13:42; Rev. 14:10; 20:15). Every condemned soul will share the testimony of the rich ruler who lifted his eyes in torments and cried, "I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24). Sadly, there is no relief available. No one will even be able to dip his finger in water and cool the everlastingly parched tongue (Luke 16:24). What a picture of physical torment!

2. Hell is a place of emotional suffering. Jesus described hell as a place where souls are "cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12).

Have you ever been exposed to the absence of light? Psychiatrists say that a man in such a condition will eventually be driven insane. why? Because darkness brings with it loneliness and fear.

In lonely desolation souls weep in hell's agony remembering opportunities which were theirs while on the earth (Luke 16:25). Small wonder that the Scriptures always describe hell as a place into which individuals are "cast down" (Mark 9:45; II Peter 2:4; Rev. 20:14). In this life people may say that they would elect to go to hell, but when hell's realities are seen, hell is never a place of choice.

Hell's Duration

Perhaps the worst possible truth about hell is that it is eternal. There will be no escape, no amnesty, no pardon, and no parole (Matt. 15:46). Oh, how we should warn our love ones to "flee the wrath to come" (Matt. 3:7).

Heaven

The scriptures speak of heaven ten times more than about hell. The word heaven appears 582 times in 550 verses. It is a place of indescribable glory and wonder. As Christians, we are already citizens of heaven. It is our home (Philippians 3:20).

Let's turn our hearts toward home and briefly consider heaven as we seek to answer two great questions: (1) Who will be in heaven? and (2) What will heaven be like?

Who Will Be In Heaven?

The Bible teaches us that heaven is inhabited by three distinct groups: the Divine, the angelic, and the human.

1. **God.** In the Revelation of Saint John, the clearest picture of heaven is seen, especially in chapter 21 and 22. John testifies of the glories of heaven and says:

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it.” (Revelation 21:22-23)

2. **Angels.** Imagine making friends with the angels. Matthew 18:10 tells us that angels in heaven presently see the Father and do His bidding.
3. **Humans.** When Jesus left His disciples to prepare them a dwelling place (John 14:2), He promised that He was preparing that place in heaven. Those who have accepted Christ are heavenly citizens (Philippians 3:20).

Sadly, many will never see heaven. There is only one way to gain admittance into heaven. That way is Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

What Will Heaven Be Like?

The song-writer has said, “Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!” For the Christian this statement should read, “Be it ever so splendid, there's no place like heaven!”

Paul was so awed by the splendor of heaven that words failed him (II Corinthians 12:1-4).

Heaven is a place of great beauty. There is a crystal sea (Revelation 22:1). There are foundations of precious stones (Rev. 21:19-20), gates of pearl (Rev. 21:21), and streets of gold (Rev. 21:21).

Heaven is a place of great blessing. In heaven, God will wipe away all tears, and remove all pain (Rev. 21:4). Loved ones will be eternally united (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Darkness will be no more (Rev. 21:23).

Heaven is a perfect place. God is there and sin is forever banished (Rev. 21:3).

Yes, the Bible says much about heaven and hell. There is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. Who have you told about heaven recently?

- Most people who deny the reality of hell base their arguments on _____
- How can we define hell? _____
- What kind of suffering will be endured in hell? _____
- Who will be in heaven?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- What will heaven be like? _____

GROUP TIME

What are some theories that men hold to deny a belief in a literal hell?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

BIBLE STUDY

The following material is given for your personal Bible Study and Christian growth. The basic assignments for the course are given and a special “achiever” assignment is suggested for those who desire to go the extra mile. Before you begin, pray that God will allow you to really grow through this endeavor.

SCRIPTURE ASSIGNMENT

As you look up the answers for these questions in your Bible, pray that God will burden you to warn others about hell and bless you with the reality and the splendor of heaven.

Read Your Bible and answer the Following:

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1. What Kinds of people are punished by “hell” (Revelation 22:15)

2. In what future events will those who are presently in hell be required to take part? (Revelation 20:13-14) _____

3. Does the Bible seem to teach various degrees of damnation? (Matthew 11:23)
_____ Explain: _____

4. What did Jesus call heaven as He was about to die? (Luke 23:43) _____

5. Who will dwell in the New Jerusalem? (Revelation 21:24) _____

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6. How does Luke 16:24 show us that hell is a place of conscious suffering?

7. How does Mark 9:44,46, and 48 describe hell? _____

8. How does one get to hell? (Hebrews 2:3) _____

9. Who will not be in heaven? (Revelation 21:8) _____

Achiever Questions

1. Where is the word heaven first mentioned in the Bible? _____

2. Who will be in hell?

a. Revelation 20:10 _____

b. Revelation 19:20 _____

c. Revelation 20:15 _____

d. Psalm 9:17 _____

e. Matthew 7:21-23 _____

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MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, (The books of Moses called the Pentateuch of the Law.)

Verse: John 14:2-3

“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 unto Myself that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Achiever’s Verse: Matthew 13:42

“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT

1. In the fly-leaf of your Bible write the following:

Heaven - Revelation 21:22; John 14:1-6

Hell - Luke 16:19-31; Mark 9:42-50; Revelation 14:10-11

2. Write a brief description of heaven on one side of an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper, then on the other side write a brief description of hell.