

Heaven and Hell

I. Introduction to the course

A. The course content

1. Death Defined –
2. Only Two Destinations –
3. Moment of Death –
4. Hell: Biblical Definition –
5. Suffering in Hell –
6. Eternal Punishment –
7. Hell is Real –
8. Eternal Joys of Heaven –
9. Heaven: Before and After Judgment Day –
10. Heaven: Biblical Description –
11. We Can be Sure of Eternal Life! –
12. Common Questions and Answers –

B. What we will try to learn

1. About death and dying.
2. Hell and eternal punishment.
3. Heaven and eternal joy.
4. How we can be sure.

C. How to prepare for each session

1. Read the chapters from the book.
2. Answer the questions on the handouts.
3. Consider the issues that are being raised by the readings.

1. Death and Hereafter

1. What is physical death?
2. What is spiritual death?
3. How do physical death and spiritual death differ from eternal death?
4. What is the time of grace?
5. Describe the soul.
6. What happens after the soul and body separate?
7. Explain the Roman Catholic teaching of purgatory.
8. Contrast reincarnation with universalism.

2. From Death to Hell

1. What is clinical death?
2. How is clinical death determined?
3. How does clinical death differ from biological (actual) death?
4. What are reasons for discontinuing medical treatment?
5. What are near-death experiences?
6. What is the difference between Gehenna and Hades?
7. List some characteristics of hell.
8. Where is hell?

3. Punishment in Hell

1. What are the external elements of punishment in hell?
2. What are the internal elements?
3. How does the destruction in hell work?
4. What standard is used to assign punishment in hell?
5. Why do people think hell is passé?
6. What is the worst thing about hell?
7. Whose fault is it if a person is condemned to hell?

4. Real Hell/Real Heaven

1. How do people deny hell?
2. How can we be certain that hell exists?
3. How can a loving God send people to hell?
4. Why do we talk about hell?
5. What is the problem of just relying on God's justice?
6. Give some earthly terms in which we describe heaven.
7. Who will see God and when?
8. Who will be at home in heaven?

5. Description of Heaven

1. In what three ways is the word “heaven” used in the Bible?
2. Where is heaven located?
3. What do we know about heaven before judgment day?
4. What will our resurrected bodies be like?
5. How will “the new heaven and the new earth” be formed?
6. What will not be in heaven?
7. Who will be in heaven?
8. What will we be like in heaven?

6. Das Reich Muß Uns Doch Bleiben

1. What is Christian hope?
2. Why can we be sure we are going to heaven?
3. What will happen if you are sinning when you die?
4. Is it still possible for me to fall away and perish?
5. Why are the funerals of unbelievers so challenging?
6. Why do we not have eulogies in our churches?
7. Is cremation sinful? Why or why not?
8. Are there really haunted houses?

Heaven and Hell

1. Death and Hereafter

II. Death Defined

A. What is death?

1. What is the origin of death? – Man was not intended to die. The LORD created him to live forever. He gave him everything he needed to live in harmony with the LORD and to serve Him. It was man who decided to risk death to get a prize of unknown worth – the knowledge of good and evil. {*“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3:4-6*}
2. Who dies? – Because one man (and woman) became contaminated by the disease of death, all men have become contaminated with the disease. Moreover, all living things on earth have become contaminated. All humans, animals and plants will die. {*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12*}
3. What happens at death? At death, a separation occurs. The type of separation depends on the type of death. {*The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7*}

B. Body and soul

1. What is a soul? – The soul is the spiritual part of a person. It cannot be studied by science or understood by logic. It interacts strongly with both the portion of the brain which we call the “mind” and the portion we call the “heart,” yet it is neither of them because the Bible references them separately, and many animals can also be said to have a mind and heart. {*Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ” Matthew 22:37*}
2. Is physical death the end of the soul? – If death were the end of the soul, then there would be no life after death. There could be no punishment of the soul after death. Scripture, however, warns us that there is such punishment. {*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28*}
3. Is physical death the end of the body? – If death were the end of the body, there would be no resurrection from the dead on the last day. Scripture tells us that there will be such a resurrection. {*“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.” John 5:28-29a*}

C. Types of death

1. Spiritual death – Spiritual death is the separation of the sinner from the LORD's spiritual blessings. This happened to Adam and Eve as soon as they ate the forbidden fruit. At this point they were incapable of doing anything to reestablish their relationship with God, just as a corpse is incapable of reestablishing relationships with the living. Since then, every human has been spiritually dead from their conception. {*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. Ephesians 2:1*}
2. Physical death – Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. We cannot tell the exact moment when this happens, and it is not necessarily at the same moment when a person is declared clinically dead by some human standard. {*Ecclesiastes 12:7*}
3. Eternal death - Eternal death is the separation of the sinner from the LORD's presence and from His eternal blessings forever. Unlike spiritual and physical death, its effects cannot be reversed. {“*Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*” } Matthew 25:41}

D. Life and death

1. Time of Grace – Those who do not repent and accept the call of the Gospel during their lives will not have another chance. {*Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Hebrew 9:27*} The time of grace is the time that we live upon this earth, and we do not know when it will come to an end. We must therefore not waste our time of grace nor deprive others of theirs. {“*As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*” } John 9:4}
2. How do believers view death? – To believers heaven is what we long for because we will no longer suffer the physical and mental anguish that is our lot in this sinful world. Death is the door through which we must pass to enter heaven. Therefore, with Paul we can all say, “*I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*” {*Philippians 1:23b*}

III. Only Two Destinations

A. The soul at death

1. What does the soul look like?
 - a. Invisible – The soul is not visible, and therefore we cannot see it under normal conditions. Moreover, it is not invisible as air is invisible. Air is a physical substance, while the soul is not. Like the angels, it is a spirit. {*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28*}
 - b. Recognizable – Once the soul passes into eternity, it will be recognizable to those in that realm. Therefore it has the characteristics that permit that recognition. {*And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. Revelation 20:4b* “*In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.*” } Luke 16:23}

2. Where does the soul go at death?
 - a. Judgment – After death the soul is summoned to be judged by the LORD. *{Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Hebrews 9:27}*
 - b. Reward or punishment – The soul experiences the judgment immediately from our point of reference, not after some long period of time. *{Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:43}*
3. The souls of unbelievers go immediately to hell. – The obvious conclusion from the Bible is that those who do not believe will be punished eternally. Moreover, that punishment begins as soon as souls leave the body. Because they cannot remain on Earth and they cannot be with the LORD because of their unforgiven sin, hell is the only place left for them. *{For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. 1 Peter 3:18-20a also see Luke 16:19-31}*
4. The souls of believers go immediately to heaven. – The promise of salvation is the center of Biblical teaching. That promise is realized as soon as the soul leaves the body at death, as St. Paul clearly indicates. *{We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Philippians 1:23-24}*

B. Are there other chances at heaven?

1. One death and judgment per customer – When people die and their souls separate from their bodies, they have had their chance to believe and be saved. That may have been a large chance because they lived many years in an area where the Gospel was actively preached or it may have been very small in a remote and pagan land. When death comes, it doesn't matter. The LORD judges. *{Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Hebrews 9:27}*
2. Purgatory
 - a. Origin – Because the early Roman Catholic theologians did not understand that God is not a creature of time, they thought that no one before Christ could obtain the forgiveness of sins because His atonement had not yet occurred. They therefore assumed that these souls had been warehoused (in *limbo patrum*) until Christ's death and were released to enter heaven when Christ descended into hell.
 - b. Growth of idea – The idea of a holding pen for souls was revived to keep straying members in line. During the dark ages clergy feared that forgiving sins too easily would let members too readily return to the sins of the moral morass in which they lived. Fear of severe punishment beyond the grave was meant to curb this tendency.
 - c. Fleecing of sheep – Church leaders soon realized that if the works of the living could impact the duration of punishment in purgatory, then the church could benefit by extracting contributions to intercede for the souls of those assumed to be in purgatory. Because the length of time a soul must spend in purgatory was arbitrary, it could be lengthened or shortened as church coffers required.

- d. Doctrinal error – The central doctrinal error is that man has to make temporal satisfaction for sins, even if they are forgiven. This is the result of the failure of the Roman Church to reject the concept of the church having to establish laws of ceremonial purity (sanctification) that corresponded to those that existed in the Old Testament. *{(We) know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16}*
- 3. Reincarnation – This teaching of Hinduism has no Biblical basis. It arises from the desire of people to have another chance to live a holier life and to atone for sins that have been committed in this life. It is just another way for people to become their own saviors and not need Christ.
- 4. Universalism – The concept that we are all going to heaven, but just by different roads, because a loving God will finally save everyone, with maybe only a few exceptions of those people who were truly horrible to their fellowmen. The Bible emphatically repudiates this idea. *{“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14}*

Heaven and Hell

2. From Death to Hell

IV. Moment of Death

A. The moment of death

1. Only God knows – The exact moment when the soul and body separate is known only by the LORD. Its relationship to clinical death and brain death is not known to us.
2. Clinically dead and really dead – A person is clinically dead when he or she no longer has vital signs as defined by the level of technology being employed. Real death occurs when the chemical processes of death in the organs of the body are no longer reversible.
3. Death in the old days – During much of the Earth's history and in many places today, a person is judged to be dead when he stops breathing and has no pulse (heartbeat). Without modern technology it was rare for someone to return to life from this state.
4. Being dead today – Death is now usually declared based on the lack of a brain wave, if the equipment to measure such activity is present. This is brain death in the broader sense. However, because the core of the brain can sustain many bodily functions even after what we generally call the "mind" and "heart" of the brain are destroyed, there is the issue of personal death versus bodily death.
5. Life support aids
 - a. IVs and feeding tubes – These devices are intended either as a temporary means to administer food and medicine during a medical procedure and while recovery is occurring or to allow those who are dying to do so in a controlled, less painful way.
 - b. Ventilators – These are intended to keep people alive who have breathing problems but who are otherwise capable of recovering and/or living.
 - c. Circulatory aids – Devices, ranging from pacemakers to heart-lung machines, are intended to keep nutrients moving through the body by aiding in blood circulation.
 - d. Pain and stability medication – These are intended to help the patient endure the pain and trauma to the body caused by medical procedures and disease. This permits the body to concentrate on the healing process.
 - e. Vitamins and health medicines – These are intended for the long-term health of the body rather than to deal with the short-term challenge of death.

B. Managing the moment of death

1. Purpose of treatment
 - a. Recovery – The goal is return the person to health so that he can function at a level similar to that he enjoyed before the need for medical treatment began.
 - b. Long-term stabilization – While the person will never return to full health, the goal is to allow the person to live a restricted life in some comfort.
 - c. Pain relief – The goal is in the short and/or long term to reduce the pain the person experiences and therefore to improve his quality of life.

- d. Control of dying – When a person’s prospect of recovery or stabilization is low and near-term death seems inevitable, the goal is to manage the downward slide so as to reduce pain and unstable behavior.
 - e. Other (organ harvest, guilt, religion, experimentation, teaching) – Preventing the final declaration of death may have goals which are not related to the medical condition of the patient.
2. Reason for ending treatment
- a. Success – If the goals are reached, it is time to wean the patient from the treatment in a way that will not cause future dependencies.
 - b. Death – If the body of the patient dies or wants to die, accept the situation as the will of the LORD.
 - c. Failure to accomplish goals – When the treatment is not making progress toward meeting the goals established for it, it is time to discontinue the treatment, replace it with another that has better prospects of success or change the goals.
 - d. Lack of resources – Faced with a lack of resources, triage becomes necessary to permit the greatest good for the greatest number of people to be done.
 - e. Humanitarian concerns – If the only effect of keeping the patient alive by artificial means is that the patient is enduring suffering, there is no need to punish the patient.

C. Principles of life and death

- 1. Life is the property of God – Only God has the right to end human life. When we are responsible for medical support decisions, we must remember that we are not to anticipate the moment that the LORD will call a person out of this world. {*“See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.” Deuteronomy 32:39 I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God. My times are in your hands.” Psalm 31:14-15b*}
- 2. The matter of motive – We all will die; it is just a case of when. If we die quickly or away from medical resources, there are no decisions related to death to make. Death will happen, and the living will deal with the consequences. When medical means are available, a decision must be made on which means and to what extent they are to be used. It is then that one must question one’s motives in the decisions that are made. {*“For your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.” Genesis 9:5*}

D. Near death-experiences

- 1. What causes them?
 - a. Encounter with eternity – When people become clinically dead and then are revived, have they experienced an encounter with the beginnings of the judgment procedure of the LORD? Some believe they have because they have “experienced” incredible love. Others have felt the horrors of facing hell. But has the soul really separated from the body, signifying death in God’s eyes?

- b. Sub-conscious preprogramming – Is what people experience initially at clinical death the triggering of a program that the brain has stored based on what it has been led to believe will happen at death? Because there are cultural differences in the experience, this is possible.
 - c. Efforts of the mind to cope with a suddenly changed condition – When the circulation fails, parts of the nervous system begin to shut down before the rest. Are parts of the brain suddenly lacking normal inputs and generating their own to try to supply missing data?
2. Are they indicative of what will happen in eternity? – Is there a relationship between what people experience during a near-death experience and the judgment that will befall them at their actual deaths? The proportion of positive experiences would seem much too high for this.

E. Deathbed visions

1. Blessing from the LORD? – When a Christian is dying, does the LORD really sometimes send a vision of the future to strengthen the believer in the critical minutes before death? While this would be possible, how can we be sure what someone else is seeing? Is this supernatural or natural?
2. Mental effort to deal with reality? – Faced with the end of its existence, does the mind execute a subconscious plan to calm itself?

V. Hell: Biblical Definition

A. What terms the Scriptures use for hell

1. Gehenna
 - a. The Hebrew origin – Gehenna is derived from the “the Valley of Ben Hinnom.” It was the place where people sacrificed their children to Molech. {*He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech. 2 Kings 23:10*}
 - b. Punishment of body and soul – It became known as the place where God would punish the evil people. As such, it is used in the New Testament to indicate the place of the final torment of body and soul. {*“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell”.* Matthew 10:28}
2. Sheol
 - a. The Hebrew origin – Sheol means the realm of the dead. It is used to mean the grave or hell, i.e., places where the living do not want to go. {*If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. Psalm 139:8*}
 - b. A place of judgment – Because man was never meant to die, the fact the body dies means it goes somewhere it should not be. It was held as a place of hopelessness because the dead could never again come into the presence of the LORD at His altar.

3. Hades
 - a. The Greek origin – Hades was the place to where all the dead went. There were a number of theories on what happened there, from reward and punishment to segregation by class based on earthly life. In the Septuagint it is used to translate Sheol.
 - b. Punishment of soul – It is used in the New Testament to represent the place where the soul is punished before the final resurrection. As such, it indicates the immediate punishment upon death. It is only the first stage of the punishment that will be endured. *{In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. Luke 16:23}* The Roman Catholic Church was influenced by the two different words for hell (Gehenna and Hades) to devise the idea that perhaps merit could be earned by suffering to allow the soul to escape final damnation.
4. Tartarus – This is a term from Greek mythology which means a deep abyss. It implies being put into deep hopelessness. It is only used once. *{For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment. 2 Peter 2:4}*

B. Nature of Hell

1. Separation from God – When people are condemned to hell, it is the final time that they will be in the presence of the LORD. They will never feel the warmth of God's love again, but rather the agony of His absence and displeasure. Without the presence of God there can be no happiness and no hope. *{“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Matthew 25:41}*
2. Condemnation of God – The LORD is the supreme court. His final word is not appealable or amendable. It is for eternity without parole. Not only will God ignore the unbelievers, He will hand them over to be tortured and to immense suffering. *{“Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” John 5:29b}*
3. Eternal Punishment – The punishment of hell is active. There is no relief and no hope. It is continual horror with the fear of horror to come. It will burn the flesh and burn the soul. *{In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. Jude 7}*
4. Jesus' endurance of hell – Because the punishment of hell must be endured for every sin committed, Jesus had to endure the force of hell at its highest intensity. It was indescribable. The suffering of crucifixion paled by comparison, but His crucifixion occurred to allow us to concentrate on the scene of the battle and relate to His efforts on our behalf. There was never grief like this. *{We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6}* About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”--which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* Matthew 27:46}

C. Details about hell

1. Its residents
 - a. Satan and his demons – {Matthew 25:41 above}
 - b. Souls of unbelievers – {Luke 16:23 above}
 - c. Unbelievers – {“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.” John 3:36}
 - d. Ignorant people – {He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 1:8}
 - e. Evil doers – {Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10}
2. Its location – The location of hell is unknown. Since it is a place that will endure throughout eternity, it should not be assumed to have a physical location either on the Earth or anywhere in the universe. {They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power. 2 Thessalonians 1:9}

Heaven and Hell

3. Punishment in Hell

VI. Suffering in Hell

A. Active torment

1. Fire – The eternal fires of hell are a constant theme through the Bible. { *“They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* Matthew 13:42} The nature of the fire is not known, but it is unquenchable { *“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* Matthew 3:12} and affects both body and soul { *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ”* Matthew 25:41}.
2. Torment – The soul will be in agony in hell. Pain will permeate it. Nothing will take the pain away. { *“And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.”* Revelation 14:11}

B. Despair

1. Deprivation – In hell people are deprived of everything they hold dear. They could not take it with them, and they do not have it – no material comforts and no friends to console them. It is what Jesus experienced on the cross. { *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”--which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* Matthew 27:46}
2. Wrath and anger – It is a horrible thing to have the Almighty God as your enemy. His wrath and anger dwarf any experience we have ever had. { *But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.* Romans 2:8-9}
3. Loathsome – The unbelievers in hell will be loathsome. Every trace of beauty and comeliness will be gone. They will be loathsome to themselves and everyone else. { *“And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”* Isaiah 66:24}
4. Darkness – Despite the fire hell will be a dark realm. Will there be any light at all? Only as much as is necessary to remind the people of their loathsomeness and desperate condition. { *These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.* 2 Peter 2:17}

5. Weeping and gnashing of teeth – The weeping and gnashing of teeth that the unbelievers experience is caused by their total despair. They despise God for putting them there, and they cry out in their rage against their hopeless situation { *“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.”* Luke 13:28 }.

C. Final doom

1. Second death – The second death is eternal separation from God. In addition to all the unpleasantness of hell, the inability to find any way to reach God and to beg for mercy or to gain vengeance creates a situation of complete loss of everything meaningful internally. { *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”* Revelation 21:8 }
2. Destruction – In eternity things last forever. Destruction also lasts forever, never coming to completion, so that relief can be obtained. All the evils of hell will combine to run those in hell around in a never-ending circle, ever heading for but never reaching the logical end. { *They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.* 2 Thessalonians 1:9 }
3. Degrees of punishment – There will be degrees of punishment in hell, and they will be related to the chances someone has had to hear the Gospel and believe. Those who pass up one opportunity after another will suffer the most. This should spur us on to particularly be concerned for the brothers and sisters in the visible church so that they do not fall away. { *“If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.”* Matthew 10:14-15 }

VII. Eternal Punishment

A. Abandon all hope ye who enter here!

1. Is hell still there?
 - a. Do we have hell on earth? – Because there can be a lot of suffering here on earth, and many people have terrible things happen to them, some teach that hell is endured here on earth. A real hell is denied because it would force a real change in life by those who want to avoid it. Many people do not want that. Yet bad things on earth can hardly be considered God’s punishment for the sins of the individual because they happen to good and bad, believers and unbelievers.
 - b. Hell is after death – The Bible clearly indicates that God’s judgment occurs after the time of grace (life) has ended. { *Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.* Hebrews 9:27 }

2. The punishment of hell lasts forever – The eternalness of the punishment of hell is indicated throughout the Bible. That theme does not change as further revelation is given.
 - a. *{Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2}*
 - b. *{“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.” Matthew 18:8}*
 - c. *{2 Thessalonians 1:9 above}*
 - d. *{In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. Jude 7}*
3. God won't change his mind
 - a. The unchanging God – If God said one thing and then later did something else, He would be a sinner like unto us. This is not the nature of the LORD. *{“He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.” 1 Samuel 15:29}*
 - b. The promise to punish – God did not threaten to punish people to make them shape up. He does not want people simply to be less evil. He therefore promises punishment so there can be no doubt about the change He wants in people *{‘So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ” Psalm 95:11}*.

B. Hell is no picnic

1. The worst part of hell
 - a. It will not end. – Suffering is more endurable if one knows that there is an end to it. It gives the mind something to focus on to give it courage. There is no such hope in hell because there will be no end. *{“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out... where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ ” Mark 9:43,48}*
 - b. There are no breaks. – Short of an end to the suffering, a break can produce hope. A few minutes of relief could strengthen the will for yet another round of torture. There are no breaks from the torment in hell. *{It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. Revelation 20:10}*
2. Why has God revealed this doctrine in Scripture?
 - a. God desires our salvation. – The LORD God is just; He is not vindictive. He desires everyone to repent and turn to Him for salvation. *{Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:4}*

- b. God wants the damned to have no excuse. – The LORD has been calling people to repentance since the day man fell into sin. He shows Himself blameless for their damnation by sending messengers to warn them of the coming judgment. {*“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.” Matthew 23:33-35*}
3. Whose fault is the damnation of the wicked?
- a. Not God’s – The LORD has done what is necessary and then some to bring people into heaven. He is not hasty to condemn. {*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9*}. He desires and He acts, but most people are still lost {*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17*}
 - b. The wicked themselves – Many contribute to the damnation of the wicked, from the parents who generated them to the devil who works tirelessly for their damnation. Yet after all is considered, it is the lost themselves who bear the blame for their being sent to hell. {*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” Matthew 23:37*}

Heaven and Hell

4. Real Hell/Real Heaven

VIII. Hell is Real

A. The denial of hell

1. Joking about hell – When people want to minimize or avoid seriously thinking about something, they tend to joke about it. Hell is not a joking matter, because it is real, and most people are going to end up there for eternity. They must figure that if they don't take hell seriously, God won't either. *{Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. 2 Peter 2:10b-12}*
2. Rationalizing hell out of existence – People appeal to the concept of a “loving God” to convince themselves that He won't really send them to hell. But God is also a just judge, and our sins are grievous. *{The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. Nahum 1:2}*
3. Challenging God over hell – People console themselves with the idea that God can't go against the whole human race. They argue that He must just be trying to scare us into being better than we are now. The kingdom of God is not democratic. *{Every living thing that moved on the earth perished--birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Genesis 7:21-23a}*

B. The certainty of hell

1. Same verses as heaven – The Biblical statements about hell often appear in the same verses as do the statements about heaven. One cannot accept one and reject the other. *{“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” Matthew 25:46}*
2. Urgency of the message – If people are going to go to hell if they do not repent and believe in Jesus, then it is imperative to get that message out. Jesus isn't just a security blanket to help us through the trials of this world; He is the only way to avoid hell. *{“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.” John 3:36}*

3. God does not lie – If what the Bible says about hell is not true, then God is a liar. The implications of that idea are too scary for words. {*God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? Number 23:19 Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar; because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 1 John 5:10*}

C. How can a loving God send people to hell?

1. God writes the rules – In an absolute monarchy, the king writes the rules. If he is an honorable king, he writes the rules for the benefit of his people. The LORD is the king of kings. {*“Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.” Exodus 23:13*}
2. God is just – When a judge sits on his judgment seat, one expects him to rule in cases according to the law. The LORD has a perfect knowledge of the law because He made it. One should therefore expect perfect justice from the perfect judge. {*“He does not leave the guilty unpunished.” Exodus 34:7b*}
3. Justice when mercy fails – Any defendant who insists that he had a right to commit some or all of the crimes he committed and has nothing with which to pay for his crimes can expect to experience the full weight of the punishment prescribed by the law. That is what those can expect who do not accept the mercy offered through Christ. {*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. Romans 1:18-19*}

D. Is it loving to talk about hell?

1. False friendship – Earthly friendship is often about making people happy. People do not want to hear that they have serious faults and are under God’s wrath. It does not show real friendship to them, however, to let them wander unknowingly into hell. {*If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Ecclesiastics 4:10*}
2. False prophet – False prophets attract followers by promising them something for their devotion. The Latin phrase is *quid pro quo*. By doing what the false prophet says, people are promised a way to heaven. God does not honor the promises of false prophets. {*“They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.” Jeremiah 6:14*}
3. False watchman – A false watchman does not give the warning that danger is at hand. He knows that he will be more popular if he lets people sleep rather than wake them to hear what they will find disturbing. {*“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.” Ezekiel 3:17-18*}

4. False path – People love to take the easy way. They make a shortcut over the lawn rather than using the sidewalk. People are always seeking an easy path to heaven which gives them earthly joys and/or satisfaction. They don't want to know such paths lead to hell. {*“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”* Matthew 7:13-14}

E. Justice versus grace

1. Everyone in hell believes in God. – By the time people find themselves in hell, a time when it is too late, they will all believe in God. They will not love Him, but there will be no doubt in their minds that He exists. Even the devil believes in God. {*“By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.”* Isaiah 45:23}
2. Demanding justice is a request for damnation. – Because the reward for rebelling against the LORD is eternal damnation, only a fool would request what he deserves. {*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 6:23}
3. Grace paid for by eternal punishment. – The only way God will forgive sins is if they have already been paid for. Only then will He have a gracious attitude toward the sinner. {*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.* 1 Peter 2:24}

IX. Eternal Joys of Heaven

A. Heaven in earthly terms

1. Eternal life – We will live forever in heaven.
 - a. Promised – The Old Testament contained the promise of eternal life for believers. {*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.* Daniel 12:2}
 - b. Proclaimed – The New Testament tells that it comes through Jesus Christ. {*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 6:23}
2. Salvation – We have done evil and deserve to be punished for our sins. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are saved from having to bear this punishment. {*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thessalonians 5:9}
3. Inheritance – Jesus did more than get us off the list of those to be punished and into some neutral state. No, He got us to be put on the list of heirs who have a guaranteed position in heaven with all of the angels and God's saints. {*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’ ”* Matthew 25:34}

4. Glory – Heaven is more than a nice place. It is a place that makes 5-star hotels look like the slums. There is a continuous feeling of victory there. Everything shines with the love of God. *{I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Romans 8:18}*
5. Rest
 - a. Relief from the weariness of life – The lives of the Christians can be tiring. Not only do they have to live in a sin-troubled world like the rest of mankind, but they have to bear the scorn of those who do not believe and do not want to hear about their sins. Yet the LORD is watching, and at the proper time He will call us home to rest. *{There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:9-11}*
 - b. God calls when He wills. – Sometimes we wonder why people don't die when they are supposed to. To our human mind, it seems like the LORD should have a general program for human lives that we could count on, at least for the "the righteous." The LORD, however, calls people from this world when it is the right time for His purposes and the best times for our souls. *{The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death. Isaiah 57:1-2}*
 - c. The evil will not rest – While unbelievers also toil and grow tired in this sinful world, they will struggle even more in hell. They will never feel any rest, but continual stress and weariness. *{So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." Psalm 95:11}*
6. Wedding feast
 - a. Jubilant – For Jews living under Roman rule, the feast at the time of a wedding was the height of joy. Unlike civil or religious feasts where the Roman military kept a close watch for trouble-makers, the wedding feasts were regarded as private and non-threatening to the state. These feasts also held out the hope of future Jewish generations which would be free of Roman rule. *{Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " Revelation 19:9a}*
 - b. Inclusive – Jesus indicated that the heavenly feast would be inclusive of those who were not Jews by birth. The joy was available to everyone, not just those of the right pedigree. *{“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 8:11}*

B. Presence of God

1. Seeing God

- a. The crowning joy of heaven – When we have good friends, we cannot wait to see them face to face. Getting a letter from them is nice, and talking to them on the phone is better. Yet nothing compares to a face to face meeting when one is in their presence. The LORD is the best friend we have, so it is natural for us to want to see Him face to face above all things. *{And I--in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness. Psalm 17:15}*
- b. With clear vision – No matter how much we strive to know God in this world, our vision is always imperfect because of our sin. In heaven we will be holy and able to fully comprehend the things which are holy. *{Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12}*

2. Others who see God -

- a. Angels – The Bible tells us that the angels, even at this time, behold the LORD. *{For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. Matthew 18:10}*
- b. Everyone – When Jesus comes again, the unbelievers will also see Him, and they will be in terror and confusion. *{Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. Revelation 1:7}*

C. Home

1. The home of God

- a. The place of His power – He is far above us. *{Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. Ecclesiastics 5:2}*
- b. The place of His love – He sees our plight and sends aid. *{“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Luke 11:13}*

2. The home of angels – The angels also reside in heaven. We shall see them there and be like them in holiness. *{When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Mark 12:25}*

3. The eternal home of believers

- a. All will be there. – *{“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’ ” Matthew 25:34}*
- b. Some are already there. – *{For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. Ephesians 3:14b-15}*

D. The way to heaven – The only way to heaven is through Jesus Christ. *{Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6}*

Heaven and Hell

5. Description of Heaven

X. Heaven: Before and After Judgment Day

A. Three types of heaven

1. Atmosphere (sky)

- a. Where birds fly – One of the terms for which the word “heaven” is used in the Bible is for the earth’s atmosphere. From earliest times people understood that which they could not see, namely, air. It was definitely present. {*And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.”* Genesis 1:20}
- b. That which towers over – People knew the atmosphere extended above the ground some distance. They were eager to become remembered for finding out how far. {*Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”* Genesis 11:4}

2. Outer space

- a. Part of all creation – In the beginning God made everything that was. The Hebrews used the phrase “heavens and earth” to indicate this concept. {*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* Genesis 1:1}
- b. Where he put His lights – The LORD placed the sun, moon and stars above any place to which man could climb. Man long wondered about this, and regarded the place where they were as a “higher heaven” than the atmosphere. {*“Let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth” And it was so.* Genesis 1:15}
- c. Part of God’s domain – No matter how far away the things in outer space are, they still belong to the LORD. {*To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.* Deuteronomy 10:14}

3. Paradise

- a. Dwelling place of God – People could not see the LORD in the atmosphere or among the heavenly bodies, so they assumed that he was even higher. As such, He was the greater than any god upon earth and not limited by earthly constraints. {*Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.* Psalm 115:3}
- b. Beyond our imagination – Where God lives is so marvelous compared to where we live that even in a vision our minds cannot comprehend it. {*I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.* 2 Corinthians 12:1-4}

B. Heaven versus time

1. Location of heaven

- a. Somewhere over the rainbow? – Because Jesus ascended to get to heaven and because He talked about things of the kingdom of God as being above, many people have assumed that heaven was some physical place above the earth. *{After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Acts 1:9}*
- b. Right hand of God – Being at the right hand of God is being at the place of God's power. It is not some physical place in our universe because that would imply that Jesus could not be everywhere as He must be to be God. *{But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:12}*
- c. Where Jesus always is – Even when Jesus was on earth He was also in heaven. This is hard for us to understand in a physical sense because being at a unique physical location is one of the properties we associate with being human. *{No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man, the one being in heaven. John 3:13}*
- d. Where guardian angels stand – How guardian angels can continually be here guarding and still always be in heaven is also hard for us to understand, but we have Jesus' word for it. *{“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” Matthew 18:10}*
- e. Not in our world – Perhaps the reason God and the angels can be both in heaven and on earth is that heaven is not in our universe. It is a realm that exists independent of our time and space. Being in the heavenly realm therefore permits God and angels to also be on our earth as well.

2. Heaven before judgment day

- a. Where believers go – The Bible speaks of dying and being buried, but it speaks of believers as either going to heaven or being “gathered to his people,” an implication that they are joining the saints in their final rest. *{Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. Genesis 25:8}*
- b. There is no delay – God never speaks about holding tanks for the souls of saints, either to await some future event or to “purify” them so that they will be clean enough to appear before Him. *{Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:43}*
- c. Only the souls are there – Before the return of the LORD the souls and the bodies of those who have died are separated. Only the souls go to face the LORD's immediate judgment. Therefore only souls of those who are saved are in heaven. *{And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. Revelation 20:4b}*

3. Judgment day – Judgment day will produce a radical transformation. Jesus will return as king of the nations, and everyone, dead or alive, will be summoned to appear before Him. Heaven and earth will also be changed. *{We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17}*

C. Heaven after time

1. Heaven after judgment day – Believers have long understood that on the last day their bodies will rise to be reunited with their souls. *{I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25-27 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." John 11:24}*
2. Resurrection bodies
 - a. Transformed – Because our bodies are subject to the pain and decay of this world, they must be transformed to be fit for the kingdom of God. *{But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:20-21}*
 - b. Spiritual body – We do not know exactly what is meant by the term “spiritual body” but it certainly has some relationship to lives that are totally spiritually awake. *{It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 1 Corinthians 15:44}*
 - c. Material in nature – Our bodies will resemble us, just as Jesus’ resurrected body resembled Him. The disciples knew Him by sight and voice, even if at first they could not believe that He had risen from the dead. *{“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Luke 24:39-40}*
3. The new heavens and new earth
 - a. Introduced in Isaiah – God let His Old Testament people know that what they saw would not be the final state of things. *{“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” Isaiah 65:17}*
 - b. Prepared by Jesus – Preparation means that something must be made better than it is. *{“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.” John 14:2}*
 - c. Part of the vision of the end – God’s revelation to John indicates that a new heaven and earth will be a lot different than the old. *{Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. Revelation 21:1}*

4. Annihilation or renovation?
 - a. Annihilation – Some verses in the Bible seem to indicate that the whole creation will disappear in an inferno and that the LORD will create the new heavens and earth from nothing. {*You look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 2 Peter 3:12*}
 - b. Renovation – Other verses seem to indicate that the creation will be liberated and purged from sin and remodeled for the saints. There is insufficient information to make a doctrinal decision. {*For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Romans 8:20-21*}

XI. Heaven: Biblical Description

- A. What isn't there – {*"For the old order of things has passed away."* Revelation 21:4b}
 1. Trouble and tribulation – Those things which trouble us and make our lives miserable will be gone. {*"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* Revelation 7:14}
 2. Tears – The sadness of this life, where things often just do not work out in the way that we had hoped, will be erased forever. {*"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* Revelation 7:17b}
 3. Physical discomforts – In this world life is a constant struggle, and we often do not have all the things we need to live comfortably and contentedly. In heaven we will have no wants. {*"Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat."* Revelation 7:16}
 4. Consequences of sin – When we and our fellowmen sin, often bad things follow. We poison friendships, we lose opportunities, we have troubled consciences and we find ourselves facing difficulties with the authorities. Even repentance often does not erase the consequences of our actions. In heaven there is no sin and no evil consequences. {*Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:15*}
- B. Who will be there?
 1. The LORD – The greatest joy of heaven will be to be with the LORD forever. {*And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:17b*}
 2. The redeemed – These are described in many ways in the Scriptures.
 - a. Fellow believers – People will come from all over the world. {*I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 8:11*}

- b. Church triumphant – A new city of God, a New Jerusalem, shall exist and be inhabited by the elect. *{But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Hebrews 12:22a}*
- c. Great multitudes – A great mass of people will be in heaven. *{After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9}*
- d. Those we have known – Because we will have great knowledge in heaven, we will be able to recognize others. *{While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. Luke 24:36-37}*

3. The angels

- a. With the angels – The angels of God will be with us in heaven. *{You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly. Hebrews 12:22b}*
- b. Like the angels – Because we will be holy, cannot die and will not marry in heaven, we will be like the angels. *{“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.” Matthew 22:30}*

C. What will we be like?

- 1. The image of God – restored – We will once more reflect the glory of our God by reflecting His nature. *{We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2b}*
- 2. Full knowledge – We do not now understand the LORD or His actions in building His kingdom, but when we meet Him, we will be given this knowledge, *{Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12}*
- 3. Holiness – Everyone in heaven will have the holiness that the LORD desires of us and that we cannot produce by our own efforts. *{To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:26-27}*
- 4. Forever joyful – The joy in heaven will never be taken away from us. *{“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” John 16:22b}*

D. Degrees of glory

- 1. Do they exist? – While there will be no difference in the holiness and joy of all those who are in heaven, Scripture seems to indicate that there will be degrees of glory. *{Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. Daniel 12:3}*

2. What are they? – Various ideas have been suggested. While there will be no need to exercise authority over the saved, there may still be positions of honor. This is alluded to several times in the Bible. {*Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* Matthew 19:28}
3. How are they earned? – Only the LORD knows the answer to this question. Because he has given different talents to different people, He may judge people based on what He gave them rather than some absolute standard. Some events in Jesus’ life and some of His parables seem to suggest this (e.g., the widow’s mite {Mark 12}, the parable of the talents {Matthew 25}).

Heaven and Hell

6. Das Reich Muß Uns Doch Bleiben

XII. We Can be Sure of Eternal Life!

A. Christian Hope

1. Why we hope – We hope because we cannot see the final revelation of the eternal kingdom of God. While we live on earth, hope has to stand in for sight. *{For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Romans 8:24-15}*
2. In what we hope – Our hope is placed solely in Jesus because we know that in ourselves is not the righteousness necessary to stand before the LORD. We hope because we have faith in what Jesus has done for us. *{Through him (Jesus) you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:21}*
3. The importance of hope – If we lose hope in God, then we are left to our own devices, and these can never comfort us because they can guarantee us nothing before God. By hoping in God's promise, we are hoping in something that cannot fail. *{Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:22-23}*

B. Be sure that you are going to heaven!

1. The purpose for which Jesus came – The Son of God became incarnate specifically to prepare a sure way to heaven. *{“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16}*
2. Forgiveness is universal – Jesus died to remove all the sins of the whole world. There are no sins that have not already been atoned for. *{But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1b-2}*
3. Ours only to reject – The LORD has given us heaven as a gift. It is ours unless we reject it. *{For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23}*

C. What if I am sinning when I die?

1. Nature of grace – Grace is not a minute by minute thing so that one has to worry that one might lose it at any minute. Grace is rather an attitude of God toward us. It does not fluctuate any more than a parent's love fluctuates. *{Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2}*
2. Continuing forgiveness – Because we are God's children, He is ready to forgive us again and again. We indeed sin much because we have trouble keeping our eyes on the prize, but are easily distracted. The LORD has planned for our weakness. *{Where sin increased, grace increased all the more. Romans 5:20b}*

D. Is it still possible for me to fall away and perish?

1. Fear of falling – It is certainly possible for Christians to fall from faith. It can happen quickly. All we have to do is to start trusting in our ability to manage our salvation and to ignore the LORD's precious free gift. Spiritual starvation and synergism are too common ways people fall from faith. *{So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Corinthians 10:12}*
2. Strength of God – The LORD is willing and able to preserve us in the faith. If we rely on Him, our salvation is sure. *{To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 24-25}*
3. Way of escape – God will always give us a way to deal with the temptations that put our faith at risk, if we will but trust Him and pray for His aid. *{And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13b}*

- E. Confirmed in bliss – Because heaven is our Father's home and our home, we will never leave it once we arrive there. We will arrive cleansed from our sins and will never be able to sin again. Heaven is where we will belong. *{Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. Revelation 3:12}*

XIII. Common Questions and Answers

A. What to say to mourners

1. Funeral home – If the person showed evidence of a faith based on Jesus' atonement, then one can speak of the believers going to heaven. If not, then it is best to speak only in terms of human life. We must remember that there are only two possibilities for the soul of the deceased. *{“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:16}*

2. Deceased unbeliever – It is important not to give false hope or false comfort. It is also not the time to get the mourners to face the reality that those who die without faith in Christ are damned. The important thing is to speak in a way to keep the lines of communication open to be able to witness to Christ at a future time. *{Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” Galatians 3:11}*
3. Deceased believer – When believers die, they are home. We should talk about their joy on finally being with God. We should comfort people that the current pain they feel will pass but the joy of heaven will never pass. *{Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4}*

B. Funerals

1. Why in church? – The church sanctuary is where believers commonly come together to meet the LORD. It is only reasonable that when a fellow member has left this world to go to his eternal home, those still alive would want to meet with the LORD to seek His comfort and thank him for His goodness in the accustomed place. There is no requirement to do so, however.
2. Why no eulogies? – Nothing that the deceased did will affect his salvation. Therefore it is pointless to discuss his life, but only the object of his faith. *{If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11}*
3. Why close the casket? – The funeral service is, in part, meant to redirect our focus from the deceased to the comfort of God’s word and the work that we yet have to do for God’s kingdom while we remain on earth. The funeral service is for the living, not for the dead. The casket is therefore closed to show that the earthly chapter of the life of the deceased has ended. *{Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Ecclesiastics 5:1}*

C. The remains

1. Why Christian burial? – Historically people were buried quickly because of the danger of disease from dead bodies and the smell of their decaying. Followers of the LORD have commonly buried their dead as a sign of faith in the future resurrection. *{“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” John 5:28-29}*
2. Is cremation wrong? – There is no Biblical injunction against cremation, provided it is not being used to try to escape God’s judgment. It certainly won’t prevent that. *{For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10}*

D. Souls of the deceased

1. Do they haunt the earth? – No, those people and places that are “haunted” are actually being afflicted by one or more demons. Satan’s angels can use what they learned from people before they died to create the impression that they are those people’s spirits returning to earth. At death people’s souls (spirits) are summoned to appear before the LORD for judgment. *{The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ecclesiastics 12:7}*
2. Are they aware of us? – No. When people enter eternity, they are either in heaven beyond the cares of this world or in hell where they are unable to benefit us. *{But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us. Isaiah 63:16 When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Isaiah 8:19}*
3. Will others know us in heaven? - Our bodies will resemble us, just as Jesus’ resurrected body resembled Him. The disciples knew Him by sight and voice, even if at first they could not believe that He had risen from the dead. We can therefore conclude that we too will be recognizable. *{“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Luke 24:39-40}*
4. Is there time in eternity? – We do not understand how eternity works, and therefore we cannot discuss time, a concept that we have gotten used to on earth, in terms of eternity.

E. Conditions in heaven

1. How old will we seem? – The Bible provides no information to answer this question. We may be assured, however, that we will be at the best age to enjoy the endless glory of heaven.
2. Will there be animals there? – Because the Bible says nothing about animals in heaven, we cannot assume that they will be there. They will only be there if there is some reason for them to be there. Animals do not have souls, so we should not expect our beloved pets to be there.
3. What will we do in heaven? – The only thing that we can say for sure is that we will worship the Lord. *{Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!” Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!” Revelation 19:5-7a}* We also know that heaven is described as a wedding feast, so it is likely we will eat and drink. Beyond this we do will not know until we get there.