

# From Here To Eternity

Death And Beyond

Bible Studies for **Ashfield Presbyterian Church**  
*ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au*

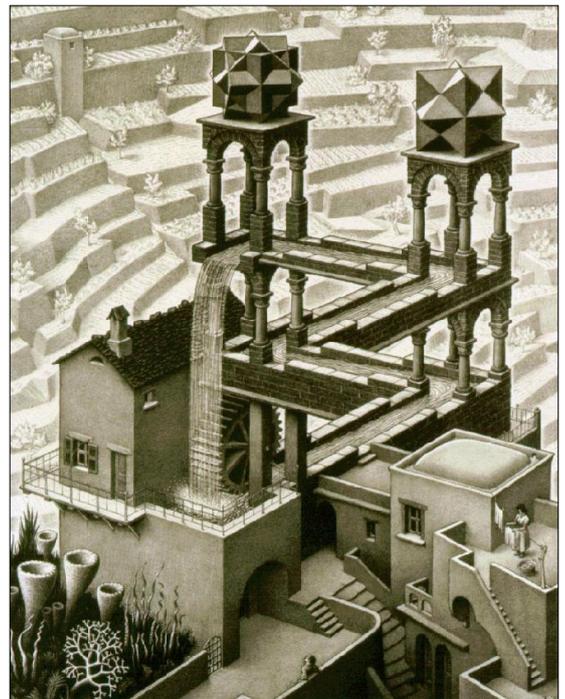
## Introduction:

Eternity. There's something about that word that makes us curious; that raises our interest. One of the ways human beings are unique is that we have a perception about eternity. It's a sneaking suspicion, a feeling that we can't quite pin down, that there has to be something more to reality than simply what we see. Ecclesiastes 3:11 puts it like this: "God has set eternity in the hearts of men."

The Ancient Roman philosopher Cicero said, "There is, I know not how, in the minds of men, a certain presage, as it were, of a future existence; and this takes the deepest root, and is most discoverable, in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls."

Alexander Smith, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish poet, caught a glimpse of something outside of the visible world when he wrote, "Eternity doth wear upon her face the veil of time. They only see the veil, and thus they know not what they stand so near!"

Recognising that death could not be the end, William Penn, a 17<sup>th</sup> cent American politician, said, "For death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity." While Woody Allen, in typical fashion, says, "Eternity is really long, especially near the end."



Over 35 years Arthur Stace chalked the word "Eternity" on the pavements of Sydney an estimated half a million times. He was converted to Christianity on the night of 6 August 1930, after hearing an inspirational sermon by Rev. R. B. S. Hammond at St. Barnabas Church, Broadway. Two years later, on 14 November 1932, Arthur was further inspired by the preaching of Evangelist John G. Ridley on "The echoes of Eternity" from Isaiah 57:15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits Eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." John Ridley's words, "Eternity, Eternity, I wish that I could sound or shout that word to everyone in the streets of Sydney. You've got to meet it. Where will you spend Eternity?" would prove crucial in Stace's decision to tell others about his faith.

In an interview, Arthur Stace said, "Eternity went ringing through my brain and suddenly I began crying and felt a powerful call from the Lord to write Eternity." Even though he was illiterate and could hardly write his own name legibly, the word Eternity, "came out smoothly, in a beautiful copperplate script. I couldn't understand it, and I still can't."

These studies look at the words of the One who inhabits eternity, and thus who is uniquely qualified to speak of eternity. They examine what God, in the Bible, has to say about death, resurrection, the return of Jesus, judgment, heaven and hell. They are designed to complement the sermons at Church. Most Home Groups use them in the week **before** the Bible Talk, and find that this helps to prepare them to hear the talk. Hopefully, any unanswered questions will also be addressed. The studies will work just as well for personal study. Perhaps you could find two or three short times during the week to work through each passage and set of questions.

# 1. Death

## ***Life is Short!***

'Nothing is more certain about life than the fact of death. It may be long delayed, but it will surely come. All human history and experience point to that conclusion. It has been demonstrated a thousand times in the lives of those about us who have been called from among the living. Heart attacks and other diseases, accidents, wars, fires, etc., have taken their toll. Death is no respecter of persons. It may come to any one, young or old, rich or poor, saint or sinner, at any time or any place. And when God calls, none can escape, nor excuse, nor alibi that appointment. Divine revelation solemnly states that, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment," Heb. 9:27. **Truly life is short, death is sure, and eternity is long.'**

Lorraine Boettner *Immortality*. (P&R, 1956), 9.

## ***Death Lib***

The liberating thing about death  
Is in its fairness to women  
its acceptance of blacks,  
its special consideration  
for the sick.  
And I like the way  
that children aren't excluded,  
homosexuals are welcomed,  
and militants aren't banned.  
Con men can't con it  
Thieves can't nick it  
Bullies can't scare it  
Magicians can't trick it.  
Boxers can't punch it  
Nor critics dismiss it  
Don't knows can't not know  
The lazy can't miss it.  
Governments can't ban it  
Or the army defuse it

Judges can't jail it  
Lawyers can't sue it.  
Capitalists can't bribe it  
Socialists can't share it  
Terrorists can't jump it  
The Third World aren't spared it.  
Scientists can't quell it  
Nor can they disprove it  
Doctors can't cure it  
Surgeons can't move it.  
Einstein can't halve it  
Guevera can't free it  
The thing about dead  
Is we're all gonna be it.

Steve Turner, "Up to Date" (Sevenoaks UK: Hodder and Staughton Ltd. 1987), pp 72-73

1. What point is Steve Turner making about death?

For us, death seems such a normal part of life, following as surely as night follows day. Yet, it was never designed by God to be like that.

2. What do we learn, from Gen 1:30-31; 2:16-17, about the world God created?

3. How and why did death enter the world? See Gen 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23.



## ***Three Kinds of Death: Spiritual - Physical - Eternal***

Lorraine Boettner *Immortality*. (P&R, 1956). 16-18.

**1. Spiritual death** means the separation or alienation of the soul from God. It is in principle the condition in which the Devil and the demons are, but since in this world man's descent into evil is restrained to some extent by common grace, it has not yet proceeded to such a degree of depravity as is found in them. This was the primary penalty threatened against Adam in the Garden of Eden. Since man can only truly live when in communion with God, spiritual death means his complete undoing and the continual worsening of his condition. It means that while man may still perform many acts which are good in themselves, his works never merit salvation because they are not done with right motives toward God. Spiritual death, like a poisoned fountain, pollutes the whole stream of life, and were it not for the restraining influence of common grace ordinary human life would become a hell on earth.

The opposite of spiritual death is spiritual life. It was this to which Jesus referred when He said to Martha: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die," John 11:25, 26. And again, "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life," John 5:24.

**2. Physical death** means the separation of the soul from the body. This, too, is a part of the penalty for sin, although, as indicated in the preceding section, it is not the most important part. In contrast with the angels, man was created with a dual nature, a spirit united with a body. He receives information through the avenues of sense. His body is the organ through which he makes contact with other human beings and with the world about him. When he dies he loses that contact, and, so far as we know, the spirits of the departed have no further contact with the living nor with the world about us... The Bible gives no reason to believe that the dead can communicate with the living, but quite the contrary.

At death man's body, which is composed of some thirty different chemical elements, returns to the earth from which it was taken. This phase of death, too, was conquered by Christ when He made atonement for the sins of His people, for they eventually receive a gloriously restored resurrection body.

**3. Eternal death** is spiritual death made permanent. 'This,' says Dr. Berkhof, 'may be regarded as the culmination and completion of spiritual death. The restraints of the present fall away, and the corruption of sin has its perfect work. The full weight of the wrath of God descends on the condemned. Their separation from God, the source of life and joy, is complete, and this means death in the most awful sense of the word. Their outward condition is made to correspond with the inward state of their evil souls. There are pangs of conscience and physical pain. "And the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever" Rev. 14:11.'

4. What does God think about death (Ps 116:15; Jn 11:35)?

5. What is God's plan for death?  
Isaiah 25:7,8;

1 Cor 15:26

6. How does God plan to destroy death? See John 11:25
  
7. What does Jesus' death and resurrection achieve?  
Acts 2:24;  
  
Hebrews 2:14-15;  
  
Revelation 1:18
  
8. Do you think it's wrong to think about death? Read Ps 90:12; Mt 24:42.
  
9. What does God promise about death (Rom 8:38-39)? What is the basis for Paul's confidence?
  
10. What lesson do we learn about the right perspective to death from Lk 12:13-21?
  
11. What is Paul's attitude to death in Phil 1:20-23? What do we learn about what happens after death from these verses?
  
12. What do we learn about death from Stephen's experience (Acts 7:54-8:2)?
  
13. What is God's attitude to people who put being faithful to him even before death (Revelation 12:11-12)?
  
14. What should be the Christian's attitude to death  
2 Cor 5:8  
  
1 Thess 4:13-16  
  
Heb 11:35  
  
Revelation 2:10  
  
1 Cor 15:55-57

***Prayer Points:***

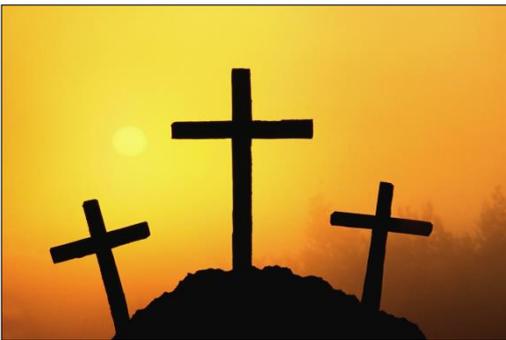
## 2. What Happens Between Death And Resurrection?

*“Death is a temporary cessation of bodily life and a separation of the soul from the body. Once a believer has died, though his or her physical body remains on the earth, at the moment of death the soul (or spirit) of that believer goes immediately into the presence of God with rejoicing.” Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p816*

1. What do we learn about death from Phil 1:21-23? Fill in the missing words:

*For me to live is Christ, and to die is \_\_\_\_\_... I desire to depart and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, which is \_\_\_\_\_ by far.*

2. How is death for believers described in Revelation 14:13?
3. What does the Bible mean by ‘falling asleep’? John 11:11-14; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 Cor 15:6, 51; 1 Thess 4:13-15.



4. Read Lk 23:43. What two things does Jesus teach us about what happened to the thief after he died?

### ***Not Purgatory***

*“The fact that the souls of believers go immediately into God’s presence means that there is no such thing as purgatory. In Roman Catholic teaching, purgatory is the place where the souls of believers go to be further purified from sin until they are ready to be admitted into heaven. According to this view, the sufferings of purgatory are given by God in substitute for the punishment for sins that believers should have received in time, but did not.” Grudem, 817*

5. Read the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Lk 16:19-31. This implies several things about what happens when we die. It implies that, in some way, there is some connection between the place where Christians go (to Abraham’s side), and the place where sinners go (Hades). However, there is a “great chasm” between the two places preventing any crossing over. It also implies that those in Hades are conscious. What is the point Jesus is making in telling the story?

Erickson makes the point that the New Testament distinguishes between Gehenna and Hades. Hades is the place of the dead where the unrighteous go for the period between death and judgment day and their resurrection (Lk 16:19-31), whereas Gehenna is the place of punishment assigned permanently at the last judgment (Mk 9:43-48; Mt 10:28) (Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1183)

6. Read Revelation 6:9-11. This implies that the souls of martyred Christians are in heaven, and that they are conscious of what is happening on earth, and long for justice to be done. How does this make you feel as you persevere in following Jesus? (See also Heb 12:1).

### ***Not Soul Sleep***

These verses teach that the doctrine of soul sleep is incorrect. *“The doctrine of soul sleep teaches that when believers die they go into a state of unconscious existence, and the next things that they are conscious of will be when Christ returns and raises them to eternal life... Support for the doctrine has generally been found in the fact that Scripture several times speaks of the state of death as ‘sleep’ or ‘falling asleep’ (Mt 9:24; 27:52; Jn 11:11; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:6; 1 Thess 4:13; 5:10)... But when Scripture represents death as ‘sleep’ it is simply a metaphorical expression used to indicate that death is only temporary for Christians, just as sleep is temporary (Jn 11:11-13)”* Grudem, 819-20.

7. Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. This passage talks about three states for us: our present earthly body (clothed with our earthly tent), our heavenly body (an eternal house in heaven not built with human hands, clothed with our heavenly dwelling), and an intermediate state, represented by being naked, or being unclothed.
- What does it mean, “if our earthly tent is destroyed” (v1)?
  - Which of these three states have we been designed for (v5)?
  - While three states are described in vv1-5, how many places for our spirits are described in vv6-9?
  - What is Paul’s preferred state, and location?
  - What attitude should we have towards dying as a result of this passage?
  - What attitude should we have towards living as a result of this passage (vv9-10)?

## ***The Intermediate State***

The intermediate state refers to what happens to the Christian between the time of his death and the return of Christ. It involves his spirit/ soul separating from his earthly body. He is instantly in the presence of Jesus in Paradise (Lk 23:42), where he rests, consciously awaiting Judgment Day when he will be receive a resurrection body (1 Cor 15:51-55; 1 Thess 4:15-16).

8. How does this truth comfort the loved ones of a Christian who dies?

### ***Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)***

#### ***Chapter 32: The State of the Dead and the Resurrection***

*I. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.*

*Gen. iii. 19; Acts xiii. 36; Luke xxiii. 43; Eccles. xii. 7; Heb. xii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 1, 6, 8; Phil. i. 23 with Acts iii. 21 and Eph. iv. 10; Luke xvi. 23, 24; Acts i. 25; Jude ver. 6. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 19*

#### ***Prayer Points:***

### 3. The Return of Jesus

*“With the exception of the certainty of death, the one eschatological\* doctrine on which orthodox theologians agree is the second coming of Christ. It is indispensable to eschatology\*. It is the basis of the Christian’s hope, the one event which will mark the beginning of the completion of God’s plan.”*

Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1186.

\* eschatology is the study of the end times.

1. What proof has God given that he will send Jesus to judge the world (Acts 17:31)?



2. Why is Jesus looking forward to his return?

a. John 17:24;

b. 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:10

c. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7

d. 2 Thess 1:10

e. Matthew 25:21

f. Luke 12:37

3. What will happen when Jesus returns?

a. 1 Cor 15:52-55

b. 1 Thess 4:13-18

c. 2 Peter 3:7

d. 2 Peter 3:10

- e. Acts 3:20-21
- f. 2 Thess 1:5-10
- g. Hebrews 9:27-28
- h. Mt 25:31-46

4. Is it possible to predict when Jesus will return? What do we learn from the following verses?

a. 1 Thess 5:1-3

b. Mt 24:36-37

c. Acts 1:7

5. Will it be possible to miss Christ's return? What do we learn from the following verses?

a. Mt 24:29-31

b. Lk 17:22-25

c. Acts 1:11

d. Revelation 1:7

6. Will it be possible to get a second chance once Jesus returns (Lk 17:26-31)?



## 4. Our Resurrection

### ***Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)***

#### ***Chapter 32: The State of the Dead and the Resurrection***

*II. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever.*

*I Thess. iv. 17; I Cor. xv. 51, 52; Job xix. 26, 27; I Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44.*

*III. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour; the bodies of the just, by His Spirit, unto honour; and be made conformable to His own glorious body.*

*Acts xxiv. 15; John v. 28, 29; I Cor. xv. 43; Phil. iii. 21.*

1. Although not as obvious as in the New Testament, the Old Testament gives several direct promises of resurrection for the believer. What do we discover in the following verses about resurrection?

Job 19:25-27

Isaiah 26:19

Daniel 12:2

Ezek 37:12-14

2. What is Jesus' view about the bodily resurrection of believers? See; Mark 12:24-27

Jn 5:25-29

Jn 6:39-40

3. When will the bodily resurrection of believers occur? See I Thess 4:16-17.



4. What were the qualities of Jesus' resurrection body? See  
Lk 24:38-43

Jn 20:19

Jn 20:27

5. On what basis can we be confident of our resurrection? See  
I Thess 4:13-14

Rom 8:11

Colossians 1:18

I Cor 15:20-23

6. What motivation does our resurrection provide? See  
I Cor 15:29-34

I Cor 15:54-58

7. What will happen to the bodies of unbelievers at Christ's return? See  
Daniel 12:2

Jn 5:29

Acts 24:15

8. It won't just be humankind who will be restored at Christ's return – creation itself will be renewed. This is taught most clearly in Rom 8:18-23. What is creation like now? For what is it longing?
9. The message of the Bible is that our resurrection will be physical. What do we learn about the nature of our resurrection bodies from these verses?  
Philippians 3:21

Rom 8:11

Rom 8:22-24

Revelation 21:4

10. What will happen to those who are still alive when Christ returns?

1 Thess 4:15-18

1 Cor 15:51-52

11. Complete the table. How does 1 Cor 15:35-53 describe the old body and the resurrected body?

	The Old Body	The Resurrected Body
36-38		
42		
43a		
43b		
47-49		

*A word of explanation: Verses 44-49 uses the word “spiritual” to describe our resurrection bodies. This does not mean that they will not be physical, rather that their **nature**, or **origin**, will be heavenly rather than from the earth. This is the point of comparing Adam with Jesus in verses 45-48. “The word... never means ‘non-physical’ but rather ‘consistent with the character and activity of the Holy Spirit’s guidance” (Grudem, 832). A better contrast would be to refer to “natural” and “spiritual” bodies.*

“It is important to insist on the resurrection of a real, physical body... because this provides a clear affirmation of the goodness of God’s physical creation. We will live in bodies that have all the excellent qualities God created us to have, and thereby we will forever be living proof of the wisdom of God in making a material creation that from the beginning was “very good”. We will live as resurrected believers in those new bodies, and they will be suitable for inhabiting the ‘new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (2 Peter 3:13).” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 835)

**Prayer Points:**

## 5. Judgement

### ***Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) Chapter 33***

*I. God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil. (Acts xvii. 31; John v. 22, 27; 1 Cor. vi. 3; Jude ver. 6; 2 Pet. ii. 4; 2 Cor. v. 10; Eccles. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 16; Rom. xiv. 10, 12; Matt. xii. 36, 37.)*

*II. The end (purpose) of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. (Matt. xxv. 31 to the end; Rom. ii. 5, 6; Rom. ix. 22, 23; Matt. xxv. 21; Acts iii. 19; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9, 10.)*

*“The great final judgment... is for many people one of the most frightening aspects regarding the future, and well it might be for those who are apart from Christ and consequently will be judged to be among the unrighteous. For those who are in Christ, however, it is something to look forward to, for it will vindicate their lives... It is not intended to ascertain our spiritual condition or status, for that is already known to God. Rather, it will manifest, or make public, our status.” Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1200-01*

1. What is God’s plan concerning the judgment to come? Heb 9:27

2. What part does Jesus play in this?  
Acts 17:31

Mt 25:31-33

Jn 5:22, 27

3. What part do believers play in this judgment?  
1 Cor 6:2-3

Revelation 3:21

4. Why is God delaying judgment? 2 Peter 3:3-9



5. What will occur at this judgment?

Revelation 20:11-15

Mt 16:27

1 Cor 4:5

Revelation 11:18

6. For what will we be held accountable on the day of judgment?

2 Cor 5:10

Mt 12:36-37

Rom 2:15-16

James 4:17

7. How can we escape judgment?

Jn 3:16-18

Jn 5:24

8. On what basis can we be confident of escaping judgment? Rom 5:9-10

9. What attitude should the coming judgment produce in us now?

James 4:11-12

Rom 14:10

Col 3:25

Rom 12:19

1 Peter 4:4-6

Ezek 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9

10. What will be the response to the dispensing of God's justice on that day?  
Rom 3:19

Revelation 19:1-2

11. What comfort can the certainty of judgment bring the believer?  
2 Thess 1:4-10

1 Peter 4:16-17

***Prayer Points:***

## 6. Hell

### ***A Christian Essential***

*“The sentimental secularism of modern Western culture, with its exalted optimism about human nature, its shrunken idea of God, and its scepticism as to whether personal morality really matters -- in other words, its decay of conscience -- makes it hard for Christians to take the reality of hell seriously. The revelation of hell in Scripture assumes a depth of insight into divine holiness and human and demonic sinfulness that most of us do not have. However, the doctrine of hell appears in the New Testament as a Christian essential, and we are called to try to understand it as Jesus and his apostles did.”*

J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993), 261.

### ***Sinner In The Hands Of An Angry God***

Jonathan Edwards, 1741

*“They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell... They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them... it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off... The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him... The devils watch them; they are ever by them at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.”*

The biblical portrait is that hell is a place of eternal, conscious punishment for the wicked. We might well wish hell were not part of the Christian teaching, but the reality is Jesus believed it existed, and he warned people about it – a lot. Someone has calculated that 13% of Jesus’ speech is to do with hell. Nearly half of his forty parables have hell as their subject.

1. What images are used to describe hell?

Mt 5:22; Mt 25:41; Revelation 20:14-15; Jude 7

Jude 13

Lk 3:17

2. What will happen there?

Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30

Dan 12:2

Mt 27:22-23; 25:10, 30, 41

Mt 25:46

2 Thess 1:8-9

2 Peter 3:7

Rom 2:8-9

3. Some people like to think that there will be a second chance to escape hell – that it is not permanent. What do the following verses have to say about that opinion?

Jude 13

Revelation 20:10

4. Some people think hell will be fun because all their friends will be there. What does Heb 10:31 have to say about that opinion?

***Hell: It's a Matter of Choice***

*“Scripture sees hell as self-chosen; those in hell will realize that they sentenced themselves to it by loving darkness rather than light, choosing not to have their Creator as their Lord, preferring self-indulgent sin to self-denying righteousness, and (if they encountered the gospel) rejecting Jesus rather than coming to him. General revelation confronts all mankind with this issue, and from this standpoint hell appears as God's gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually chose, either to be with God forever, worshiping him, or without God forever, worshiping themselves. Those who are in hell will know not only that for their doings they deserve it but also that in their hearts they chose it.”*

J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993), 262.

5. How does the quote above from Packer answer people who see that it is unfair of God to send people to hell?

6. What do the following verses have to say about people who see that it is unfair of God to send people to hell?

Jn 3:18-21

Rom 1:32

2 Thess 2:10

Heb 10:28-31

7. How should the reality of hell affect our choices now?

Matt 5:29-30

Jn 3:16-18

*“The purpose of Bible teaching about hell is to make us appreciate, thankfully embrace, and rationally prefer the grace of Christ that saves us from it. It is really a mercy to mankind that God in Scripture is so explicit about hell. We cannot now say that we have not been warned.”*

*J.I. Packer, Concise Theology, (Wheaton, IL. Tyndale. 1993), 263.*

***Prayer Points:***

## 7. Eternity: A New Heaven and a New Earth

1. For those who belong to Christ, the future is certain and joyful. What does Jesus promise in Matt 25:34? To whom?



It is unfortunate that many Christians are imprecise when talking about where we will spend eternity. They speak about “going to heaven.” This may be true in the interim period before Christ’s return, but it will only be a shadow of eternity. Our fate is much better than sitting on clouds strumming harps. Eternity will be a physical, “earthy” existence (see Study 4 on our resurrection). God’s plan of redemption involves the whole cosmos. To limit this to humanity alone is to short-change God.

2. What does God have planned for his world for eternity?
  - a. 2 Peter 3:12-13
  
  
  - b. Isa 65:17; 66:22
  
3. Read Col 1:15-23.
  - a. What things were created by Christ and for Christ (16)?
  
  
  - b. What things has God reconciled to himself through Christ (20)?
  
  
  - c. To whom was the gospel proclaimed (23)?
  
4. Read Rom 8:18-23.
  - a. What is the present state of creation?
  
  
  - b. What will happen to it?
  
  
  - c. What is in store for it in the future?
  
  
  - d. When will this happen?

5. Some passages suggest that the present creation will be destroyed and replaced by another earth, newly created by God. What do we learn from these verses?

2 Peter 3:10

Revelation 20:11

Heb 12:26-27

Ps 102:25-26

### ***Brand New, or Renewed?***

*“It is difficult to think that God would entirely annihilate his original creation, thereby seeming to give the devil the last word, and scrapping the creation that was originally ‘very good’ (Gen 1:31). The passages above that speak of shaking and removing the earth and of the first earth passing away may simply refer to its existence in its present form, not its very existence itself, and even 2 Peter 3:10 ... may be speaking of the surface things of the earth.” Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1160-61.*

### ***Heaven and Earth Joined:***

At the moment, heaven and earth are two separate spheres of existence. Heaven is where God is, and earth is our realm, the place our senses can experience. We experience God’s presence in part, through his Holy Spirit, yet this is only a taste, a down payment of God’s presence among his people in eternity. When Jesus returns, and judgement occurs, God will remove all barriers between heaven and earth, and eternity will begin in a new heavens and a new earth. It will be a place befitting God’s people with their new glorified bodies, among whom God will dwell in intimate fellowship.

6. Read Phil 3:20-21.
- a. Where is our citizenship? What is our nature and identity?
  - b. Where will Jesus come from, and to?
  - c. What will he do?
7. What do we learn about God’s future plans for Jesus in Heb 2:8?
8. What does Jesus promise the meek in Matt 5:5?

What does this suggest about where we will spend eternity?

9. Read I Thess 4:16-17.
  - a. Where will Jesus come from?
  
  - b. What will happen then?

Notice that it DOESN'T say we will then return to heaven with Christ. It says we will be caught up in the clouds and meet him in the air, and that we will then be WITH him forever. It is more likely that we will then all return to the renewed (heaven and) earth with Jesus for eternity. The imagery is of the citizens going out to meet a triumphant returning king, and then escorting him back into his kingdom.

### ***Symbolism or Literal?***

Revelation 21-22 contains a number of images describing the new heavens and new earth. The images involve the physical or material creation God has made. Although Revelation's imagery should be interpreted as symbolic, this doesn't mean we should reject any literal reference in these descriptions.

10. Read Revelation 21:1-5. What does John see?

The new Jerusalem seems to represent the people of God (see Revelation 21:10-14). How has the city been prepared (2)?

What will the relationship be like between God and his people?

11. What other physical images do we see concerning the new heavens and the new earth in the following verses?

Revelation 19:9

Revelation 22:1

Revelation 22:2

Revelation 7:16-17

Mt 25:23/ Lk 19:17

### ***So What?***

12. What is Paul's perspective on how the prize of the next world affects his work in this world (Phil 3:13-14)?

13. Read I Cor 15:58. What does the truth of a resurrected body and a restored creation mean for how we live now? What does it mean that our labour is not in vain?

## ***A Final Word***

### ***The Sands of Time are Sinking: Author: Anne R. Cousin, 1857***

*The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of Heaven breaks;  
The summer morn I've sighed for—the fair, sweet morn awakes:  
Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.*

*O Christ, He is the fountain, the deep, sweet well of love!  
The streams of earth I've tasted more deep I'll drink above:  
There to an ocean fullness His mercy doth expand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.*

*The King there in His beauty, without a veil is seen:  
It were a well spent journey, though seven deaths lay between:  
The Lamb with His fair army, doth on Mount Zion stand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.*

*I have borne scorn and hatred, I have borne wrong and shame,  
Earth's proud ones have reproached me for Christ's thrice blessed Name:  
Where God His seal set fairest they've stamped the foulest brand,  
But judgment shines like noonday in Immanuel's land.*

*O I am my Beloved's and my Beloved's mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner into His "house of wine."  
I stand upon His merit—I know no other stand,  
Not even where glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.*

*I shall sleep sound in Jesus, filled with His likeness rise,  
To love and to adore Him, to see Him with these eyes:  
'Tween me and resurrection but Paradise doth stand;  
Then—then for glory dwelling in Immanuel's land.*

*The Bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory but on my King of grace.  
Not at the crown He giveth but on His pierced hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land.*

*They've summoned me before them, but there I may not come,  
My Lord says "Come up hither," My Lord says "Welcome home!"  
My King, at His white throne, my presence doth command  
Where glory—glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.*

## ***Prayer Points:***