

XVIII. Concerning the World to Come

- ❖ ***We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.***

Eschatological Facts

- ❖ To begin, we start with the marvelous truth of Christ's second advent, or return. There are many different opinions, beliefs, and "theories" about the return of Christ. However, no matter what interpretation of eschatology you adhere to, there are some basic, fundamental facts in which most agree. Among these simple truths are:

1. Christ will return PHYSICALLY & VISIBLY to this Earth:
 - a. Acts 1:10-11
 - b. I Thess 4:16-18
 - c. John 14:3
2. There will be a resurrection of the dead:
 - a. I Cor 15:12-23
 - i. the time of the resurrection is indicated by "his coming" in verse 23.
 - b. I Thess 4:13-15
 - c. John 5:28-29
3. There will be a "final judgment" in which spiritual justice is executed in the separation of the righteous and the wicked.
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Cor 5:10
4. This world, this reality will be destroyed.
 - a. II Pet 3:10-12

b. Matt 5:18

c. Matt 24:29-31

These facts are fundamental to this Christian Doctrine. Any interpretation of eschatology warrants proof text from the scriptures. We should always be mind-full to study these truths with guidance from the Holy Spirit and without any traditional or ecumenical bias produced from today's culture. Nonetheless, how glorious these doctrines are to the saved soul!

Concerning the World to Come

- ❖ We believe that all people are created with an eternal soul. That soul is to live forever in one of two places: Heaven or Hell. We deny all concepts of purgatory or an intermediate state between this life and the next, for *“to be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord.”* Further, we believe that these spiritual destinations are not reachable by any other means other than upon death. Concerning the details of Heaven and Hell we may note the following considerations:

Hell: Home of the Wicked

- ❖ The word “Hell” appears in the Scriptures surprisingly only 54 times in the Old and New Testament. There are three words in the original script that has been translated into the English as “hell.” Interestingly, they convey three very different thoughts.
 1. ***“Sheol”*** (H7585)- “the world of the dead” (Strong's). “the underworld, grave, hell” (BDB).
 - a. Sheol is the Hebrew word used to denote the grave. The implication of this word is NOT MEANT TO DESIGNATE a “lake of fire” or a place of eternal torment. When this word is used, it simply implies physical death. It is also translated as “grave” (30 times) and “pit” (3 times).
 - b. Examples of where it is used:
 1. Isa 5:14
 2. Ps 116:3
 3. Ps 16:10

c. In this sense, we all go to hell! That is to say, we all die!

2. **"Hades"** (G86)- "place of the unseen, or the departed" (Strong). "Grave, death, hell" (Thayer). Hades is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew "Sheol." It essentially means the same. Again, eternal torment is not here intended as the definition. Interestingly, Hades is another name for the Greek god "Pluto." Pluto or Hades was the god of "the lower regions." In later Greek literature, his name simply became synonymous with death.

a. Examples of where this word is used are:

1. Matt 16:18

2. Acts 2:27- (compare Ps 16:10)

3. Luke 10:15

3. **"Gehenna"** (G1067)- "a place of future punishment" (Thayer). The Greek word, "Gehenna" is made up of two Hebrew words which denotes, "The valley of Hinnom." The valley of Hinnom is an actual place just south of Jerusalem. Many Israelites devoted themselves to idol worship here. Particularly among the most grotesque idols was "Molech." Molech was a hollowed out idol. During ritualistic sacrifices, a fire was started inside the idol and Israelites tied their young children to Molech, which became blazing hot, eventually killing the young. After this abhorrent practice was ended, the valley of Hinnom was remembered for this, and thus detested. In later years, the Jews devoted this valley for the burning of trash and dead carcasses and used it for a place of public execution. There was always a stench and smoke arose from this valley continually. See II Kings 16:3, II Chron 28:3, and II Kings 23:10. Thus, it became a very visible illustration of a future, spiritual torment.

a. This word, which denotes the future place of the wicked, is only used 12 times! Among those are:

1. Matt 5:22

2. Matt 23:33

3. Mark 9:45

❖ In Matt 5:22, Jesus attaches a future place of torment to “Gehenna.” Thus, Gehenna is synonymous with Hell as it is described today. Further, in Luke 16:13, the narrative of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the word “Hades” is used with tortuous connotations. Of course, death is always connected with sin (Rom 6:23). What do we thus conclude? Gehenna and Hades evoke the thought of a place of torment when considered in their contextual backgrounds. The New Testament takes a physical place connected with absolute horror and sin and parallels a future abode of the wicked upon death. The connection with Gehenna and fire is very clear through etymological considerations as well as verbal acknowledgements of the connection. Therefore, while the word “Hell” might only appear 54 times in Scripture, other places that reveal details about a “lake of fire” are to be considered synonymous with Hell. Observe:

1. Rev 20:15
2. Matt 3:12
3. Matt 25:41

❖ In our final considerations of Hell, we must address the debate on whether or not Hell is ETERNAL torment, or if the soul simply ceases to exist after its fiery destruction. On this, we note:

1. Isa 33:14
2. Rev 20:10
3. II Thess 1:9
4. Matt 18:8-9 (everlasting [verse 8] connected with hell fire [verse 9])

❖ In all of these verses, we must surely notice that those who perish in hell are those that do not obtain eternal life from Christ Jesus! Remember, our *classification* (righteous or wicked) determines our *destination* (heaven or hell).

1. Matt 13:30
2. Matt 25:41 & 46

Heaven: Home of the Righteous

❖ Heaven is somewhere that all Christians anticipate going upon our demise. To share with believers the knowledge of a spiritual place of joy and happiness is both elementary and unneeded. However, springing up joy and excitement in

the hearts of God's children is a wonderful privilege and it is upon this intention we now enter into our discussion of the future home of believers, that is Heaven.

1. *It is the dwelling place of the Father & Son*

- a. Acts 7:49
- b. 1 Kings 8:30
- c. John 14:2

2. *It is void completely of sin*

- a. Ps 20:6
- b. 2 Pet 3:13
- c. Ps 24:3

3. *It is the future home of the saints*

- a. Matt 5:3
- b. John 13:36
- c. John 14:1-3

4. *It is a place of immeasurable glory*

- a. Rev 7:14-17

❖ These are the fundamentals of Heaven, which most Christians are commonly well aware of. However, let's notice some "not-so-common details."

1. While the word "hell" appears only 54 times in the entirety of Scripture, the word "heaven" appears 583 times! The Jews classified "Heaven" in at least 3 distinctions. The first heaven consisted of the air & clouds, or the lower atmosphere. The second heaven contained the region beyond sight, though still fundamentally apart of this world, that is, a physical outer region or upper atmosphere. The third heaven, however, was considered the spiritual heaven or the dwelling place of God. See 2 Cor 12:2-4, Deut 10:14.

2. The phrase "heaven and earth" appears throughout the Bible in connection 228 times. In the vast majority of these cases, the writers are conveying the thought of the universe and everything in it. This phrase is a Hebraic figure of speech that usually does NOT specify the spiritual heaven, as in Gen 1:1. However, there are some exceptions, in which case context will dictate interpretation.

3. What is it that the Saints will do for all eternity? Many people have ungrounded notions and feel-good hopes of heaven and what their deceased love ones are doing. Are they “looking down on us?” Are they “waiting for us?” What does Scripture indicate?

a. Ps 89:29- to begin, we note that Heaven, just like Hell, is eternal. Of course, Christ makes this clear as he discusses ETERNAL life with his disciples.

b. Rev 4:8-11/ 5:9-14- What will be doing in heaven? Singing praise to Christ Jesus! Our sole purpose in heaven is praise and worship. Notice that nothing else occupies our mind there! We will not be concerned with anything other than Christ!

c. Is 65:17- We will not remember the things of this life. It must be noted, that we will know of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus and what he did for us. However, to what extent is not known. Matthew Henry writes concerning this topic, “*The glorified saints will therefore have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other: For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.*” Do our loved ones look down us from Heaven? While this may be a comforting thought, it is theologically impossible. However, God does look upon us and this should bring us more comfort for God has all power in Heaven and Earth!

No Pit Stops!

❖ The doctrines of an “intermediate state” are NOT founded in scripture. Some believe that we make pit stops on the way to our eternal home, however, this is not warranted by scripture! Further, many believe that we may through “spiritual mediums” conjure our deceased love ones to relay to us a “message from beyond.” Does scripture say anything about this?

1. 1 Sam 28:14-15- Can we be sure that this was really Samuel? Matthew Henry writes, “*That the devil, by the divine permission, should be able to personate Samuel is not strange, since he can transform*

himself into an angel of light! nor is it strange that he should be permitted to do it upon this occasion, that Saul might be driven to despair, by enquiring of the devil, since he would not, in a right manner, enquire of the Lord, by which he might have had comfort.”

- ❖ Summary: Upon death, the righteous enter Heaven, the wicked Hell. This is not intended to be a comprehensive study, however, these are the fundamentals of the world to come. This completes our 18 articles of faith!