

Chapter Twenty Two: Heaven & Hell

Eschatology ("the last things")

Personal eschatology = what happens to each individual after death (ch. 22).

Historical eschatology = the return of Christ to judge the world (ch. 23).

The Intermediate State

Until the Lord's return, the dead await the final judgment and the resurrection of the body. The righteous do so in heaven, the wicked in torment.

Believers are with Christ. What makes it "heaven" is less the place it is, than the Persons who are there. Contrast Gary Larson's *Far Side* vision with the Bible's:



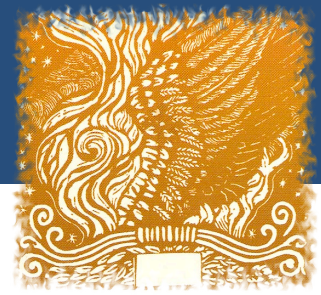
- Php 1:23 — But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better.
- 2Cor. 5:8 — We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
- Luke 23:42 — And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"
- 2Cor. 5:8 — We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
- Heb. 12:23 ... to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

Heaven = a place where God manifests his presence most intensely. It's where our High Priest and Liturgist ministers right now (Heb 8:1-2); it's where he presented his completed work on our behalf (1Pt 3:22), and it's where he is preparing a place for us (Jn 14:2).

Continuity with the OT perspective: Enoch (Gen 5:24); Elijah (2Kg 2:11; cf Mt 17:3 — Ps 23:6; 16:10-11; 17:15; Mt 22:32 — reflected also at Lk 16:22-23).

Purgatory? — 2Mac. 12:45, "Therefore he (Judas Maccabeus) made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin." Problems: a) not from a canonical text; b) conflicts with the biblical teaching on the finality of death and our inability to add anything to the work of our Redeemer.

Soul sleep? — Problem: confusion over the Bible's metaphorical language of death as "sleep" (Mt 9:24, etc.) and the Bible's horror at the appearance of loss of fellowship with God (Ps 115:17; 6:5). The passages at the top of this column point to a conscious enjoyment of a relationship with God that continues after death — and note Rev 6, where the believing dead experience even the tension of the "already & the not yet."



The Eternal State

Rapture — When the saints (living and dead) rise to accompany Jesus on his triumphant return (1Th 3:13; Jd 14; 1Th 4:16-17)

Final Judgment — Mt 10:15; 11:22,24; Ac 17:30-31; Rev 20:11-15

Believers

- 2Cor. 5:10 — For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
- Rom. 8:1 — Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (See Rom 2:14-16 ... “according to my gospel through Jesus Christ”)
- John 5:24 — “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Cosmic Impact — Mt 10:15; 11:22,24; Ac 17:30-31; Rev 20:11-15.

“Doubtless, much of the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation is symbolic, but it does describe some heightened, consummate form of physical existence.” — Frame

Resurrection bodies — See 1Co 15:42-44, “... sown in weakness ... raised in power.

If you think sex is good and family intimacy is worth working at, wait till you see what they are sacraments of. — Kidd

Worship — broad & narrow

General characteristics of our existence in the eternal state:

- Physical — see above.
- Temporal — w/ Rev 10:6, compare 21:24-26; 22:2
- We will not *be* gods, but we will dwell *with* God

Eternal Blessing of Believers

The presence of God — Mt 10:15; 11:22,24; Ac 17:30-31; Rev 20:11-15

Our inheritance: God himself (Ps 16:5) and his many blessings:

Authority — Rev 20:4; 22:5 (we reign with Christ); 1Co 6:3 (we judge angels); Mt 19:28 & Lk 22:30 (we judge Israel); Lk 19:11-27 (we rule cities).

Rewards — 1Co 3:14; Lk 19:11-27

Eternal Punishment of Unbelievers (Hell)

“If I were free to invent my own religion, I can assure you that eternal punishment would not be part of it. But I must talk about it now, because I am not free to invent my own religion; I must teach only what the Bible teaches, and the Bible certainly has a lot to say about eternal punishment. Indeed, of all the teachers in the Bible, Jesus himself has the most to say about eternal punishment, and he put considerable emphasis on it. It is no small detail in his view of human destiny.” — Frame

Condemnation for unbelievers — Jn 3:18, 36; Heb 10:26-27; 9:27

Punishment is everlasting — Rev 14:11 ... “no rest, day or night...” Note: the Bible’s language of the “destruction” of God’s enemies does not mean he puts them out of existence

Degrees of punishment — Mt 11:22; Lk 20:47; 12:47-48

Is “fear” a legitimate motivation for faith? — “Some people won’t respond to love, at least not to love alone.” See Lk 13:3,5

Eternal punishment & justice? — see Rev 15:3-4