### Heaven

#### Our ignorance about heaven

*Revelation 13:6* It must be maddening for the Devil that mankind is entitled to the home he was kicked out of. Satan need not convince us that Heaven doesn’t exist, in order to deceive us. He needs only to convince us that Heaven is a place of boring, unearthly existence.

#### What is heaven?

*(Matt 6:9)*. Wherever God dwells with His people and sits on His throne would be called Heaven. In fact in the Bible, heaven and God are sometimes used interchangeably. *(Lk 15:21)*.

#### Where do Christians go when they die?

When a Christian dies he will go to this intermediate Heaven and will not go to the Heaven where he will live forever. He will remain in this intermediate heaven till his bodily resurrection. Life in the present Heaven where we will dwell prior to our bodily resurrection is still better than on Earth.

#### The New Earth is our Eternal Heaven

The great redemptive promises of God will find their ultimate fulfillment on the New Earth, not in the present Heaven. *(2 Pet 3:13) (Rev 21:1) (Isa. 65:17) (Isa.66:22)*

God’s children are destined to live as resurrected beings on a New Earth. That is our final destination. We must not lose sight of our true destination. In the present Heaven, we’ll be in Christ’s presence, and we’ll be joyful, but we’ll be looking forward to our bodily resurrection and permanent relocation to the New Earth. This is what the Bible promises us. We will live with Christ and each other forever, not in the immediate, or present Heaven but on the New Earth, where God will be at home with His people. *(Rev 21:3).*

Since God will make the new earth His dwelling place, and since where God dwells there heaven is, Heaven and earth will then no longer be separated, as they are now, but will be one.

#### What is the New Jerusalem?

Heaven is described both as a **country** (Luke 19:12; Hebrews 11:14-16) and a **city** (Hebrews 12:22; 13:14; Revelation 21:2).

(Rev 21:1-2).Things that will be absent include:1) tears, 2) sorrow, 3) death, 4) pain, 5) darkness, 6) ungodly people, 7) sin, 8) curse, 9) anything unclean, 10) temple, and 11) sun or moon.

Things that will be present include: 1) the saints, 2) the river of the water of life, 3) healing fruit, 4) the Lamb of God, 5) worship, 6) the wedding feast of the lamb and His bride, 7) the unveiled face of God, and 8) the Sun of Righteousness.

#### New Earth and the doctrine of redemption

Understanding the doctrine of the new earth is important for a proper understanding of God’s redemptive program. Paul tells us that the creation was subjected to futility and was under bondage to corruption and was expecting to be liberated. In the same passage Paul says we were also longing for the redemption of our bodies.

(Rom 8:18-23). Christ’s work is to redeem the entire creation from the effects of sin. We fell together, and we will rise together.

*Isaiah 65:25*, sandwiched between *Isaiah 65:17* and *Isaiah 66:22,*  which specifically speak of the New Earth

Genesis 1:29-30 (Genesis 9:3) It makes sense that people and animals wouldn’t eat meat before the Fall because living beings didn’t die. Death entered the world because of sin, and before the Fall there wouldn’t have been either sin or death as we read in Romans 5:12.

### Hell

We will now see in brief what the Bible has to say about Hell. As I pointed out in my previous study for every 120 Americans who believe they go to heaven, only one believes he/she will go to hell which is in contrast to the saying of Jesus that many will choose the road that leads to destruction. Much of the biblical teaching about hell comes from the lips of Jesus. It is grim, terror-invoking and unpopular which has resulted in many Churches attempting to soften it or sidestep the subject in their preaching.

#### How hell is described

The Bible describes hell as a place of *outer darkness*, a place of *weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 8:12)*, a *lake of fire and brimstone (Rev 20:10)*, a place of eternal separation from the blessing of God, a prison, a place of *torment (Luke 16:23)* *where the worm doesn’t die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:44).* Symbolic language? Yes, because language cannot adequately describe it.

#### Misconceptions about hell

**God is absent in hell**: *(Rev 14:10)*. Those who are in hell will see God in his holy fury.

**The Devil reigns in hell:** *(Luke 12:5)* *(Matt 25:41).*

Hell’s suffering is disproportionate and hence unjust:

We can at least think of three objections to this reasoning.

*One*, We cannot understand how awful a thing it is to disobey God and are not competent to assess how much punishment it deserves.

*Two*, God did not send his Infinite Son to die on the cross for something that is just finitely evil.

*Three*, God is incapable of inflicting an unjust punishment. The Judge of all the earth will surely do what is right.

The most frightening aspect of hell is its eternality. People can endure the greatest agony, if they know it will ultimately stop. In hell there is no such hope. The Bible clearly teaches that the punishment is eternal. There is no escape through either repentance or annihilation.

The reality of hell should change our thinking and behavior. The predominant emphasis in many Christian gatherings today is fun. Yet Jesus is not pictured that way. He Himself said, *Blessed are those who mourn*. Isaiah described Him as a *Man of sorrows*. If your children are standing near the edge of a cliff unawares would you be cracking jokes? This does not mean that believers are to be morose. We can have fun, we can laugh and we can enjoy the good gifts of God. But there is a difference between happiness and frivolity. There is a place for humour but not when we are dealing with truths that have eternal consequences.

When we see people who are dear to us showing no signs of being a believer it should make us shudder. What if that person were to die tonight? Will he or she have a second chance? Will not the thought of the eternal fate of this person torment us as long as we live? What are we doing about that? An awareness of hell should produce in us an underlying seriousness. Let us be serious people, let us be thoughtful, as we live in a world where so many of our fellow creatures our perishing.