

HEAVEN, YES! HELL, NO!

I. Revelation 21:1-8

A. Jesus tells a parable, or perhaps it was a true story, about two men. A sore-covered beggar named Lazarus lies at a rich man's gate. But the rich man refuses to aid the beggar. Both men die at the same time but their eternal destinations differ. Jesus describes the place of the dead being separated by a great uncrossable chasm. Abraham's Side, a.k.a. *Paradise*, is contrasted with Hades, a place of torment. Lazarus goes to Paradise while the rich man goes to Hades. Jesus is not telling this parable as some mythical tale. We dare not dismiss it. (*Parable found in Luke 16:19-31*)

B. This same Jesus speaks to us in our text today. He speaks from His throne in heavenly glory and He tells His Apostle John, what is to come. He talks of a new heaven and earth where God's people will dwell with God and He with them. And He also talks of that place called hell, the lake of fire, a place of eternal conscious punishment. The first seven verses are amazing, beautiful, and sublime. The eighth verse is cryptic, foreboding, and beyond horrible. My prayer is that only the first seven verses apply to you and that verse eight never applies you!

C. Many avoid the book of Revelation because it's apocalyptic, full of hard to understand symbolism, commingled with realism. Revelation 20 is perhaps the most debated book of the Bible. Its various interpretations have led to multiple views of the end times. But what I'm going to read to you in Revelation 21:1-8 is vividly clear: Words that are awesome and fearful, hopeful and dreadful, epic and ghastly, depending on where you stand with Christ when that Day comes...

D. Revelation 21:1-8 (ESV) Jesus speaks of what's to come...

1) **V1: 1** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. (Heaven as it is now and earth as it is now are headed for some sort of cataclysmic transformation, all for the better...)*

2) **V2: 2** *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, (Not old Jerusalem) coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Jerusalem means, "City of Peace." Coming is a new City of Peace; a new City of Shalom...)*

3) **V3-5: 3** *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (The very words that John wrote down, you are reading here and now!)*

4) **V6: 6** *And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. (Do you know any parched souls who need to drink from that Spring?)*

5) **V7: 7** *The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be His God and He will be My son. (OV: **Conquers, overcomes, perseveres:** The one who stands in the victory won for Him by Christ; the one who clings to the salvation bought for him by Jesus' blood, purchased for him by the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God--who was slain but who lives again; the one who stays faithful and obedient to Him whom He professes. The one with faith which has substance, not empty words, in the midst of suffering, temptation, and trial. It is he who conquers!)*

6) **(I preach so verses 1-7 are yours and what's described next is never yours!)** **8** *But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*

E. Charles Spurgeon said, "It is a very remarkable fact that no inspired preacher of whom we have any record ever uttered such terrible words concerning the destiny of the lost as our Lord Jesus Christ." **But second death will not be the lot of the regenerated sons & daughters of God! Second death will not be the lot of those born again, born from above, born of the Spirit! There's an old saying: "Born once, die twice; born twice, die once."**

F. Our sins were imputed to Christ on the cross where He died for them...

1) **When Christ bled out on the cross, imputed upon Him were the sins of the cowardly. Are you coward? Are you ashamed of Christ? Fear man more than God?**

2) **Imputed upon Him were the sins of the faithless. Who or what is the object of your faith? Is it in yourself? Is it in someone or something other than Christ?**

3) **Imputed upon Him were the sins of the detestable, the vile, the corrupt, the abominable. Do any of those words describe you?**

4) **Imputed upon Him was the sin of murder? Have you taken a life? Have you been tempted to do so? Jesus' words at the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV) **21** "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' **22** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."**

5) **Imputed upon Him was your sexual immorality. Gk. *porneia*. All sex outside of Biblically ordained marriage. i.e. Your sex before marriage. Adultery. Sex with a prostitute. Pornography. Pedophilia. Perversions of every sort. Back to the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV) **27** "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' **28** But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."**

6) **Imputed upon Him your dabblings in the occult. Been messing with fortune tellers, astrology, witchcraft, necromancy, seances? Conversing with the dead?**

7) Imputed upon Him was your idolatry. All the things you hold in higher esteem than God. Deep down, what do you value more than God? Career or money? Popularity or power? Sports? Entertainment? Ministry? Family?

8) Imputed upon Him was your lying. Do you distort the truth? Give false testimony? Pretend to be someone you're not? Give false excuses? Fib? Embellish the truth or fabricate tales? And no, the above list is not exclusive. The Bible gives many lists regarding our sin. Jesus, however, died for the sins on every list!

G. Jesus has either paid for your sins or you're still in them. And if you are still in them, Verse 8 is your future. For the believer and for anyone He's calling to Himself, I refer you to **1 John 1:8-10 (AMP)** *8 If we say we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are sinners], we delude ourselves and the truth is not in us. [His word does not live in our hearts.] 9 If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just [true to His own nature and promises], and will forgive our sins and cleanse us continually from all unrighteousness [our wrongdoing, everything not in conformity with His will and purpose]. 10 If we say that we have not sinned [refusing to admit acts of sin], we make Him [out to be] a liar [by contradicting Him] and His word is not in us. (My appeal to you is to make your way to Christ in repentance so that your sins might be forgiven, washed away, cleansed for all time...)*

H. Jesus our Lord is the ultimate conquerer. He went to the cross, died for our sins, and rose from the dead, conquering sin and death and saving us from hell. Those who place their trust in Jesus will also be named among the conquerors. They will die but will never see the second death. Everyday, ordinary, faithful believers in Christ, who walk the walk, who live their lives in thankful obedience to Christ, will be named among the victorious conquerors on that Day.

I. There are other believers we might call extraordinary. Their "ordinary" faithfulness leads them into extraordinary circumstances. While not planned, they are cast into situations where their devotion to Christ becomes life-threatening. These Dear Souls become heroes of the faith and an inspiration to the rest of us. I leave you today with one such story. (Share the story behind the song, "*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.*")

The Story Behind, "I Have Decided To Follow Jesus"

Dr. P.P. Job in his book, *Why God Why* tells the story of a Welsh Missionary and his family. Following a powerful revival in Wales a couple centuries ago, many felt called to the mission field and India specifically. One man took his family to a savage area in north India where many of the tribes were headhunters. Undaunted, the Welshman began sharing the Gospel. When one family believed on Jesus, the chief was enraged. He had the man, his wife and children, captured and brought before the tribe. The chief ordered the man to renounce Christ or he would kill his two children. The man composed a song on the spot and sang, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back." The tribal archers shot the children with arrows. As they die twitching on the ground, the chief again commanded the man to renounce Christ or his wife would die. Reverently he sang his next line, "*Though none go with me still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back.*" The archers filled his wife with arrows. Then the chief gave the man his final ultimatum to renounce Christ or he would die like his wife and children. Looking up to heaven, he sang his last line, "*The cross before me, the world behind me, no turning back.*" The man likewise was executed. The chief was stunned and left speechless. The man's willingness to lose his family and himself to die for this Jesus so moved this chief that he

repented and turned to Christ, right on the very spot where he had executed this man and his family. Over the course of a few weeks, the whole tribe turned to Christ. That should make you never sing this song the same way ever again.

*** Close with singing, "*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*" and with Prayer...**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Revelations 21:1-8 (ESV)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." **5** And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." **6** And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. **7** The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be His God and He will be My son. **8** But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV)

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Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV)

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' **28** But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

1 John 1:8-10 (AMP)

8 If we say we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are sinners], we delude ourselves and the truth is not in us. [His word does not live in our hearts.] **9** If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just [true to His own nature and promises], and will forgive our sins and cleanse us continually from all unrighteousness [our wrongdoing, everything not in conformity with His will and purpose]. **10** If we say that we have not sinned [refusing to admit acts of sin], we make Him [out to be] a liar [by contradicting Him] and His word is not in us.

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"It is a very remarkable fact that no inspired preacher of whom we have any record ever uttered such terrible words concerning the destiny of the lost as our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Video Clips & Important Articles

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" - The Story & The Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnGMNvRBJ4w>

The Doctrine of Hell - David Platt, Theology Refresh - Desiring God

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/the-doctrine-of-hell>

Lazarus and the Rich Man VFX

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWpxuGCD9gl>

The Parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus - Sermon by D. A. Carson

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVymsFxyQSc>

Is the Rich Man and Lazarus a Parable? -The Late Dr. J. Vernon McGee

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgcrK16jK00>

"Dives and Lazarus" (Old English Folk Song) by Martin Simpson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQVzuwNa1nU>

Bonus Stuff

Luke 16:19-31 (ESV)

19 “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. **20** And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, **21** who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. **22** The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, **23** and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. **24** And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ **25** But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. **26** And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ **27** And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— **28** for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ **29** But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ **30** And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ **31** He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Isaiah 65:17-25 (NLT)

17 “Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. **18** Be glad; rejoice forever in My creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. **19** I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in My people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. **20** “No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young! **21** In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. **22** Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For My people will live as long as trees, and My chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. **23** They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the Lord, and their children, too, will be blessed. **24** I will answer them before they even call to Me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! **25** The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

Ay, and so it is with the wicked man nowadays. He gets rich, but what is the use of being wealthy if you must be damned? Fool that he is, if he buys a gold coffin, how

would that help him? Suppose he is laid out with a bag of gold in each hand, and a pile of it between his legs, how will that help him? Others seek to get learning, but what is the good of learning if you sink to perdition with it? Take up the learned man's skull, and what is the difference between that and the skull of the merest pauper that scarcely knew his letters? Brown unpalpable powder, they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of Tophet? (*i.e. hell*) Ah! friends, you have to die. Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh! if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap; they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone, and there is not even a wreck left behind.

Quote by Martin Luther

"What hell is, we know not; only this we know, that there is such a sure and certain place."

Quote by J.C. Ryle

"The saddest road to hell is the one that runs under the pulpit, past the Bible, and through the middle of warnings and invitations."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"The lost enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"The hell of hells will be the thought that is forever. The soul sees written over its head, '*You are damned forever.*' It hears howlings that are to be perpetual; it sees flames which are unquenchable; it knows pains that are unmitigated."

Quote by Adrian Rogers

"I believe that a great number of people are going to die and go to hell because they're counting on their religiosity in the church instead of their relationship with Jesus to get them to heaven. They give lip service to repentance and faith, but they've never been born again."

Quote by John Piper

"Having held the glory of God in contempt through ingratitude and distrust and disobedience, (those without Christ) are sentenced to be excluded from the enjoyment of that glory forever and ever in the eternal misery of hell."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"Morality may keep you out of jail, but it takes the blood of Jesus Christ to keep you out of hell."

The Biblical Evidence of Hell

by Christopher Morgan - Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/biblical-evidence-hell/>

Would a loving Jesus really teach about hell? Yes, and so does every New Testament author. Let's consider what they teach.

Hell in Matthew

In the Sermon on the Mount, often known for its emphasis on love and the kingdom, Jesus teaches the reality and nature of hell (5:20–30; 7:13–27). In [Matthew 5:20–30](#), Jesus contrasts hell with the kingdom of heaven and warns that hell is a real danger to unrepentant sinners. The fire of hell, the justice of hell, and the extreme suffering in hell are particularly stressed. The unrepentant are warned to use extreme measures to avoid being cast into it by God.

As Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount, He contrasts the kingdom of heaven with the horrors of hell (7:13–27). Jesus cautions that hell is a place of destruction, depicted as the end of a broad road. Hell awaits everyone who does not enter the kingdom of heaven— even those who profess to know Christ but continue in sin. Jesus is Judge and King who personally excludes the wicked from His presence and the kingdom of heaven (“Depart from me,” 7:23). Indeed, those who fail to follow Jesus are like a house built on the sand that ultimately comes crashing down.

Matthew also recounts Jesus’ surprising warning that Jews devoid of faith are in danger of hell, which is portrayed as outside, darkness, and a place of intense suffering (8:10–12). Jesus addresses hell when He commissions His disciples not to fear humans but God alone, “who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (10:28). In Jesus’ parables of the weeds (13:36–43) and the net (vv. 47–50), hell is seen as exclusion/ separation from the kingdom of God, described in terms of fire and is a place of suffering. Jesus later describes hell as a place of “eternal fire” (18:8) and even warns the scribes and Pharisees of hell, characterizing it as inescapable for the unrepentant (23:33).

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus speaks of future punishment in the parables of the slaves (24:45–51), bridesmaids (25:1–13), talents (25:14–30), and the section on the sheep and goats (25:31–46). Several truths about hell emerge. Hell is punishment for disobedience to the master. Hell is graphically expressed as a location where people are cut into pieces and placed with the hypocrites (24:51) and as a place of suffering (24:51; 25:30). Jesus also likens hell to being outside, or a place of exclusion/separation (25:10–12, 30), as the outer darkness (v. 30), as personal banishment from His presence and the kingdom (“Depart from me,” v. 41), and as just condemnation/ punishment (vv. 41, 46). Hell is then described as eternal. It is a place of “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41) and of “eternal punishment” (v. 46).

Hell in Mark

[Mark 9:42–48](#) is similar to [Matthew 18:6–9](#) and records Jesus’ teaching that hell is a punishment for sin that is worse than death and earthly suffering. Hell is exclusion from

the kingdom of God, a result of God's active judgment on sin, and a place of eternal suffering.

Hell in Luke

In [Luke 13:1–5](#), Jesus speaks of hell as punishment for the unrepentant, and those in hell are portrayed as perishing. In [Luke 16:19–31](#), Jesus calls for generosity to the poor by proclaiming that justice will prevail through the coming judgment on the wicked oppressors. The punishment is marked by suffering, torment, fire, agony, exclusion from heaven, and finality.

Hell in Paul

It would take too much space to survey all that Paul writes, so we will highlight Romans and 2 Thessalonians.

In his letter to the Roman church, Paul stresses that Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin, under God's wrath, and under God's judgment. Only those who have faith in Christ will escape. In this context, Paul relates important truths about hell.

First, future punishment is connected to God's wrath. The wicked are presently under His wrath (1:18–32), are objects of wrath (9:22), continually store up wrath for the day of wrath (2:5–8; 3:5), and can be saved from wrath only by faith in Christ (5:9–21).

Second, future punishment is God's judgment. The wicked are deservedly condemned under the judgment of God, which is impartial, true, righteous, and certain (2:1–12; 3:7–8). This condemnation is the result of sin and is just punishment for sin (6:23).

Third, future punishment will consist of trouble and distress. This suffering shows no favoritism between Jews and Gentiles (2:8–11).

Fourth, future punishment consists of "death" and "destruction." Sinners deserve death (1:32), the wages of sin is death (6:16–23), as sinners we bear fruit for death (7:5), those who live according to the flesh should expect death (8:13), and sinners are vessels of wrath "prepared for destruction" (9:22). Fifth, both sin and future punishment are separation from Christ ("accursed and cut off from Christ"; see 9:3).

As he encourages believers suffering persecution in 2 Thessalonians, Paul stresses that God's justice will prevail (1:5–10). In just a few verses, Paul emphasizes several important truths about hell: hell is the result of God's retributive justice on sinners; hell is punishment for those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel; hell is eternal destruction; and hell is exclusion from Jesus' presence and majesty.

Hell in Hebrews

Two passages in Hebrews speak clearly about future judgment. [Hebrews 6:1–3](#) refers to the future punishment of the wicked as "eternal judgment" (6:2), which is an "elementary doctrine" of the faith. [Hebrews 10:27–30](#) depicts this judgment as fearful

and dreadful and as a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. It also teaches that hell comes from God as punishment, judgment, and retribution.

Hell in James

The letter of James depicts future punishment primarily in terms of destruction, death, justice, and suffering. In particular, the oppressors wither away and are destroyed (1:11); sin produces death as its offspring (1:15; see 5:20); and God is the Lawgiver and Judge, able to save and destroy (4:12). James teaches that oppressors of God's people deserve to be punished severely. This just suffering is certain and severe, graphically portrayed as miseries, flesh being consumed by fire, and the day of slaughter.

Hell in Peter and Jude

Peter's second letter is filled with references to hell, and Jude closely parallels 2 Peter 2. Peter and Jude both depict hell as destruction ([2 Peter 2:1, 3, 12](#); [Jude 5, 10, 11](#)), as condemnation hanging over the wicked ([2 Peter 2:3](#); [Jude 4](#)), and as a gloomy dungeon where rebellious angels are held for judgment ([2 Peter 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#) is similar). Peter illustrates future punishment with the account of Sodom and Gomorrah burning to ashes ([2 Peter 2:6](#)) and warns that God holds the unrighteous for the Day of Judgment while continuing their punishment (2:9). Peter also writes that hell is a place of retribution (v. 13) and blackest darkness (v. 17; [Jude 13](#)). Jude adds that hell is a punishment of eternal fire ([Jude 7, 15, 23](#)).

Hell in Revelation

Revelation teaches that hell is a place where God's fury and wrath are felt at full force (14:10). Hell is a place of intense suffering, filled with "fire and sulfur" (14:10; see the lake of fire in 20:10, 14–15; 21:8), a place where "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever" (14:11). The suffering is continual: "They have no rest, day or night" (14:11), and "they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (20:10).

In [Revelation 20:10–15](#), the Apostle John emphasizes that hell is just punishment for the wicked. God casts the devil, the Beast, and the False Prophet into hell. They do not rule or have any power in hell but are "thrown" there (20:10). Hell will also contain everyone whose name is not found in the book of life (v. 15). Such will be separated from God in hell (21:6–8) and banished from heaven (22:15).

Three Pictures of Hell

Clearly, the future punishment of the wicked is a significant theme in Scripture. Jesus teaches it, and so does every New Testament author. While this brief survey has demonstrated an array of truths about hell, three key depictions of hell recur in the New Testament:

1. Punishment. The chief picture of hell is a place of punishment for sin. The punishment is deserved, consists of suffering, and is eternal.

2. Destruction. This destruction is likened to death, second death, loss, and ruin (see Robert Peterson's article in this issue of *Tabletalk* for more on this).

3. Banishment. Whereas punishment stresses the active side of hell, banishment shows the horror of hell by highlighting what unbelievers miss—the very reason for their existence, namely, to glorify and love God.

Hell—this is what we deserve. This is how sinful we are. This is what Christ endured for our sakes. And this should spur us to share the gospel.

- Dr. Christopher W. Morgan is dean and professor of theology of the School of Christian Ministries at California Baptist University in Riverside, Calif. He is coeditor of *Hell under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment*.