

“Man – His Eternal Destiny”

A study on Heaven and Hell

Luke 16:19-31/Psalm 139:8

Introduction

- Tonight we continue our series we have entitled “ground work – laying a foundation for faith.”
 - The reason we are doing this is that it is so important that every one of us are able to give a reason for the things we believe.

“Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.” – I Peter 3:15

- We are supposed to understand what we believe and as the verse above states, we are to consider, ‘why’ we believe it.
 - Why do we hold the convictions that we do?

We looked first at God – His Existence.

- So often we are told that smart people believe in things like evolution and weak-minded people believe in God.
 - But as we saw there are some great reasons to believe that something out there exists greater than you.

Next we look at God – His Word.

- If we are going to study theology, the study of God, then we need to have some logical reasons why we believe He exists and we need have a reliable source to learn about Him.
 - And although there are 27 books consider ‘religious’ in our world, all teaching different things about god – only one is backed up with consistency of scripture, archeological evidence, fulfilled prophecy, external sources and scientific facts.

Then we considered that God is the Trinity.

- He is one God, but One God that exists in three persons – not some church council – Gen 1:1
 - God the Father.
 - God the Son.
 - God the Holy Spirit.

Then we considered God the Father.

- And we looked at His attributes or as we called them His perfections because He does not just love, but He is everything Love is and nothing that love is not.
 - We saw that in His perfections and also in His names that He chooses to be called be, they reveal to us so much of who God is.

Then we considered God the Son.

- That He did not begin with Matthew 1 and Luke 2 but He has always existed in eternity past with God the Father.
 - But then took on flesh to be a sympathetic high priest, to reveal God to us and die in our place.
 - He died on Calvary’s cross and three days later rose again.

Then we dealt with God the Holy Spirit.

- That He is not an “it” or a “force” but He is God.
 - Sent to convict the world of sin, lead us into all truth and transform us into different men and women.
 - Jesus never intended for us to do life and ministry apart from the Holy Spirit – so we must not grieve or quench Him, but be filled with Him.

Then we moved on to Mankind.

- God created us with both spirit and body, with the spirit foremost but when man fell, the body took control and we started to die physically and spiritually – so Jesus had to come to die for you and me – to impart righteousness to us.

Then we look at our salvation.

- Is salvation open to anyone, can anyone be saved?
 - Are we chosen by God and our eternal destiny predetermined or do we have a choice in the manner?
 - We look how I believe the scriptures teach both.
- That God is sovereign, and yet in His sovereignty He created man to be free to choose or reject Him.
 - And both are important – theology has consequences and there are days I need to trust like a Calvinist who believes God is totally in control because He is.
 - And other days I need to respond like an Arminianist, like God is going to hold me responsible for my actions, because He will.

Last week we moved on to, Man – His fellow servant and enemy – a study on Angels and Demons.

- What are angels – they are created, they are immoral, they are innumerable, they originally were all holy until some of them rebelled and fell.
 - Demons are fallen angels – not your wicked stepmother back from the dead, they are fallen angles.
 - The chief of which is Satan or Lucifer.
- Spirit battle is real and we fight it not in our own strength but in the power of God, the armor of God.
 - The Belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit.
 - To fight against principalities and powers.

Now this week we come to our last subject and that is Man – His eternal destiny, a study on heaven and hell.

- For most of us we can't wait to get to heaven.

But we want to know – what will it be like?

- Is there going to be anything to do or will we just be sitting on a cloud playing a harp?

And the other side of the question is a tuff one – what about Hell?

- Hell is a tough concept especially for those of us who understand and appreciate the love and grace of God.
 - The thought of an eternal Hell is difficult to think about.
- And some have asked – Why would God send someone to such a place simply for not believing in Jesus?
 - If that troubles you, hopefully our study this morning will help.

So let's get the tuff one out of the way first, the one I don't really want to talk about and I sure you don't want to hear about.

- But we better understand what the Bible has to say about hell, because it is real place and people are really going to go there.
 - Many people believe many different things – my job is tell you the truth – what does the Bible say – what does the Word of Truth have to say.

The best way to understand what “Hell” is is to look at the Words the Bible uses to describe it.

3 Words the Bible uses to describe Hell.

#1 - Sheol

#2 - Hades

#3 - Gehenna

- Lets understand each of them.

#1 – Sheol – “The abode of the dead.”

- **It is translated into English, using the words “grave”, “pit”, “hell” or even just transliterated, “Sheol.”**
 - The Word is used for where those who have departed from this life were before the death of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament the word Sheol is used to describe the dwelling place of both the Righteous and of the Wicked after they depart this life.

- We see “Sheol” used to describe the dwelling place of the Righteous throughout the Old Testament – some examples are Psalm 16:10, 30:3, and Isaiah 38:10 which says...

“I said, In the prime of my life, I shall go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the remainder of my years.” – Isaiah 38:10

- Isaiah who definitely was righteous, talks about not wanting to die early, but also talks about where he is going to go, to Sheol.

We also see “Sheol” being used to describe the dwelling place of the Unrighteous throughout the Old Testament – some examples are Numbers 16:33 and Job 24:19.

- **“The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God. – Psalm 9:17**

- The word translated “Hell” in Psalm 9:17 is Sheol, and it is speaking about the abode of the unrighteous dead.

So wait a second Jason, are you saying that the righteous dead and the unrighteous go to the same place.

- I believe the Bible tells us they did, before the cross.
 - You see, we are told multiple times in scripture that the blood of bulls and goats did not take away sin but just covered it up.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” – Hebrews 10:4

- The Jewish sacrifices made the people clean but it did not take away their sin.
 - Therefore when you died in the Old Testament, before the cross, you could not enter straight into God’s presence, for the blood of Jesus Christ had not yet taken away your sin.

So where you went, good or bad was to Sheol – the abode of the dead.

- Well that doesn’t sound very fair, I thought the Righteous and Unrighteous were always separated.
 - They were.
 - And we learn that from our second word that describes “hell’ in the Bible and that is Hades.

#2 – Hades – The state between death and the resurrection.

- **It is translated into English, using the words “grave”, “pit”, “hell” or even just transliterated, “Hades.”**

- And so maybe you can see that Hades is the Greek Equivalent of the Hebrews, Sheol.
- In other words they are two names in two different languages for the same place.
- The abode of the dead before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But as I said a moment ago, even though there was one place everyone would go after death, Sheol or Hades. The Unrighteous and Righteous were still divided up.

- We learn this from [Luke 16 – turn there with me, and we will start reading in verse 19.](#)
 - In this story about the rich man and Lazarus we learn some important things about where men and women went after they died before the death of Jesus.
 - Notice first, this is not the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as some of your Bibles might say – those titles are not inspired.

- Parables are fictional stories that help illustrate a point and they are full of the phrases such as “Like or As”, “the Kingdom of heaven is like a field.”
 - This story is not a parable, but Jesus teaching what is going on after death.

The Rich man and Lazarus are in Sheol or Hades, the abode of the dead.

- But there seems to be two sides.

“Abraham’s bosom” and “Paradise” are terms used by Jesus in the story and they are both Jewish phrases to describe where righteous believers go after death.

- Lazarus is in Abraham’s bosom, or Paradise.
- And we will get back to the Righteous dead in just a minute, but lets follows the fate of the Unrighteous for a moment.

The rich man was also in Hades or Sheol, however he was not in Paradise or Abraham’s Bosom – The rich man who was unrighteous, was in a place of torment that we would think of as hell.

Not eternal hell, for we will get to that in a moment, but a holding place for the unrighteous dead until they are resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment after the Millennium.

- I believe that is where the Unrighteous went from the time before Jesus died, and I believe it is where they still go today.
 - Waiting to be resurrected to stand before the Great White throne.
 - Then they will be resurrected, they will stand before God’s Judgment seat and at that time Revelation 20 tell us...

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” – Revelation 20:12-15

After the great white throne Judgment, Hades is emptied in the Lake of Fire.

- And it this place were the unrighteous will spent eternity.
 - The term used to describe this eternal dwelling place of the dead is our third term-translated hell in our bibles.

#3 – Gehenna

- The difference between Gehenna and Hades is important, not only because it is necessary for the understanding of quite a large number of passages in the NT, but it may also prevent any misconception and remove uncertainty as to Christ's teaching with regard to the future state of the wicked.

It is the place that is eternal.

- It is this place that Jesus described where...

“into the fire that shall never be quenched — where 'Their worm does not die. And the fire is not quenched.' - Mark 9:45-46

- In fact I know today Hell is an unpopular subject.
 - I know some try to say well it is not really talked about in the scripture.
 - But the reality is, hell is talked about in scripture actually more often than heaven.
 - As we have already discussed it is described over and over again in various ways.

Hell is described as...

- **A place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quench – Mark 9:46**
- **A place of outer darkness – Matthew 8:12**
- **A place of Weeping – Matthew 25:30**
- **A place of Gnashing of teeth – Matthew 25:30**
- **A place of Wailing – Matthew 13:42**
- **A place of Flames – Luke 16:24**
- **A place of Everlasting fire – Matthew 25:46**
- **A place of Eternal destruction – II Thessalonians 1:9**
- **A place where you are Cast away from the presence of the Lord – II Thessalonians 1:9**
- **A Lake of fire, burning with brimstone – Rev 19:20**

And in all but two of these passages are descriptions Jesus gave.

- I mention that to you, because sometimes we think Jesus never even talked about Hell, He was too loving - Jesus who was the most loving man to ever walk the planet mentions hell over 70 times.
 - 13 percent of His messages, 50 percent of His parables speak of judgment and Hell.
 - In fact more than He talked about heaven.

Now the Bible is super clear about Hell.

- The Devil who is a liar has developed some softer more acceptable ideas for man to consider.
 - **Some prevailing ideas today** believed, now good people don't misunderstand me – its not biblical.
 - **Annihilationism – The unrighteous cease to exist.**
 - **Reincarnation – We move on to another life form.**
 - **Universalism – Eventually everyone goes to heaven.**
- The lie is you don't have to worry about what happens to you or other after you die.
 - The Bible contradicts this – it says, “Today is the day of Salvation” – you need to deal with this today.
 - Maybe you have some objections.
 - The three most common I hear all the time.

Objection #1 – A God of love would never send someone to hell.

- Where does someone get the idea that God loves?
 - The Buddhist doctrine doesn't say it.
 - The Koran says Allah loves everyone except sinners.
 - The Hindus don't teach it.

It is the Bible, and it's only the Bible that teaches that.

- The people treat the Bible like a salad bar.
 - I like that, oh, I don't like that, that is horrible.
 - We are right to understand God is loving from the Bible.

We love to elevate on one aspect of the nature of God above another – God is love, He is loving but He is also just and will judge sin. He is spoken of as the God of wrath -600 times.

God is loving...

But we need to understand the Bible also says that God is righteous and just and will deal with sin.

- And the Bible says He is Holy and just.
 - God in His love has made a way to forgive sinners.
 - He doesn't want to send you to hell, but you can choose to deny it.

- He does not want to send anyone to hell, but He will not stand in your way if that is where you want to go, if you refuse to acknowledge him as Lord in this life.

Objection #2 – God won't send good people to hell.

- That is true – God won't send good people to hell.
 - What are you saying, heresy?
 - But according to the Bible there are no good people.
 - **Luke 18:19 – no one is good but God.**
 - **Romans 3:10 – there is none righteous, no, not one.**
 - **Isaiah 53:6 – all we like sheep have gone astray.**
- But praise the Lord God; He has provided a way for sinners to be saved, for unrighteous folks like you and me to put on His righteousness.

It's the gospel.

- **We are all sinners. – Romans 3:23**
- **The wages for that sin is death. – Romans 6:23**
- **But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. – Romans 6:23**
- **For Christ died for us, took our place. – Romans 5:8**
- And you can receive forgiveness, how...

By believing in your heart, and then confessing with your mouth. – Romans 10:9

This answers the other question - Why would God send someone to Hell for simply not believing in Jesus.

- Yes – I am tired of pastors who get asked that on TV and squirm and change the subject or tell a story instead of simply saying – Yes!
 - It boils down to what you do with Jesus.
 - The gospel of John says in chapter 16...

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me;” – John 16:8-9

- John was saying when the Holy Spirit comes He is going to convict the world of sin – why? – because they do not believe in Jesus.
 - You see I know I can look at good moral people and say – “they try hard.”
 - But it does boil down to believing in Jesus.
 - Can you imagine being God the Father?
 - You have a world of sinful men and women.
 - And as we have already discovered, not one is righteous.
- And so the plan is for your son, your only son, to go and become a man, live a sinless life, never doing anything wrong.

And then you as a Father are going to allow your son to be brutalized – because there was no other way.

- There was no other way – for God to be both just and loving unless He paid for the sin.
 - There was no other way to save man, because we couldn't do it.
 - There was no other way – Jesus asked.

So because there was no other way, no doubt with emotions that you and I can't even image, even though some of us are parents.

- God sacrificed His son, a willing participant for you and for me.
 - And then we say – well, why is that the only way.
 - Why do I have to believe in Jesus?
- If it was my son and he said “Dad I will die for those people.”
 - And I had to let it happen because there was no other way.

- And then the people he died for said, I don't know if I like that – if I were God they wouldn't be allowed to take another breath to repent.
- But God is gracious to give us a lifetime to see the truth.
 - But if we want to live a life without Him.
 - If we want to be judged on our own works.
 - If we refuse the free gift that He has paid for with His own blood.
- Then God is more than justified to say – there is no other way and give us what we want.

But how much better to cry out and say God, thank you for loving me, thank you for saving me.

- You don't have to earn His love because He already loves you.
 - You don't have to pay for heaven.
 - The price has already been paid.
- You just have to respond.

That is what it takes to become forgiven, to become righteous, to not go to hell and be separated from God for eternity.

- You see all souls are eternal.

You will either spend eternity separated from God, first in Hades/Sheol, then after the resurrection and Judgment, separated for all of eternity in Gehenna, outer darkness forever.

- Or...
- You can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - You can receive Him as your savior.
 - And you can spend eternity in His presence.

You see last as we left our look at Righteous dead well, they were still in Hades.

- Not suffering like the rich man, not destined for Gehenna, like the Unrighteous dead.
 - But in that compartment of Hades for the Righteous.
 - Called Abraham's bosom.
 - Called Paradise – both Jewish phrases to describe the place of the Righteous dead.

I believe the other compartments of Hades, Paradise and Abraham's bosom, no longer exist.

- For when Jesus died on the cross.
 - Sin was no longer just covered it was taken away.
 - And Jesus it seems in those three days between his death and resurrection, one of the things He did was to take the Righteous in Hades or Sheol, and take them to the presence of God, to what we would think of as heaven.

You see after the Resurrection of Christ.

- The location of Paradise was changed from a compartment of Hades or Sheol to the Presence of God.

The apostle Paul was "caught up to the third heaven . . . into Paradise." (2 Corinthians 12:1-4)

- Paradise, therefore, now is associated with the immediate presence of God.
 - Ah heaven...
 - Paul said he was caught up the third heavens.
 - What is that all about?
- Well just like there are 3 words that the Bible translates as Hell.
 - There are three ways the Bible uses the term heaven.

#1 – Where the Birds fly

“Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?” - Job 35:11

#2 – Where the Sun and Stars are

“In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end;” - Psalm 19:4-6

#3 – Where the Lord’s Throne is

“The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD's throne is in heaven; - Psalm 11:4

- Heaven as we now think of it, is today being in the presence of the Lord.
 - Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:8

“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” – 2 Corinthians 5:8

For the Righteous today, and ever since the cross, there is not a holding place; your last breath on earth will be followed by your first breath in heaven, in the presence of God.

Now as we begin to wrap this up this morning...

- What is that going to be like?
 - What is heaven going to be like??
 - So often I think the world thinks of heaven as a never-ending church service – that doesn’t sound too great.
 - Or sitting on a cloud playing a harp with fat baby angel – again not very interesting.
- But those ideas I find completely wrong biblical.

In fact we are not told much about what heaven will be like.

- One of the reason I believe that is so is what Paul says about heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:4-5
 - He describes it as...
- **“...inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” – II Corinthians 12:4**
- Paul – the man who could say anything five different ways.
- Paul the master of languages, found no words to describe the wonders of heaven.
 - I wonder if we are not told too many details because the temptation would be too great to just end it here and get on with it there.

But listen even though we are not told much, what we do know is still mind blowing.

- #1 - In heaven there will be no more pain, sin, or suffering.
 - The curse is removed – who knows what life is really supposed to be like.

Some scientists have speculated that in the Garden of Eden the air was far more oxygenated than it is now.

- Meaning for Adam and Eve it was fun to breath – you could run and not get tired.
 - Who knows, well Paul said in I Corinthians 2:9 – eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, nor has it even entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those that love him.
 - Can we even image how wonderful it will be?

You know when it talks about there being streets of gold.

- Understand the significance.
 - It is not saying that you will walk through heaven and say, oh gold streets, chip off a block Earl we are rich.
 - No way – it is speaking to you and me that is what is most precious here on earth, what drive countries to war and occupies our minds.
 - In heaven it will as insignificant as asphalt – because of the wonder of everything else.
- The curse is gone – Life is as God intended it to be – with no death, no sin, no suffering, and no sickness.
 - Oh how wonderful heaven will be.

Not just the reverse of the curse, #2 - but in heaven things will be made right.

- What I mean, well Jesus said “The last will be first and the first will be last.”
 - Do you go through life and sometimes think that isn’t fair.

Why is that guy blessed, and that one over there seems to get all the bum luck.

- He loves the Lord and yet trial after trial.
- It doesn’t make sense – until you factor in heaven.
 - Heaven is the great equalizer – where God is going to set things right, the way they should be.

You take ministries – my ministry is to the teach the Word of God to you guys, can I be honest – that is not a real tuff ministry – oh there are tuff moments in it but I teach, you show up, and then afterwards most tell me how blessed they were.

- Now when I get to heaven, lets be honest, I have received a lot of my reward right here and now, I don’t know if there will be any left.
 - But some of you faithfully pray, some of you faithfully give, some of you faithful serve your unbelieving husband or wife and no one notices, no one thanks you for your ministry – and sometimes the devil whisper in your ear – not fair.
 - Remember heaven!!!!!!

Heaven, where the curse is reversed and Life is as God intended, what that means I don’t even know, but it will be a blessing.

- Heaven – the place where things are made right, where the last are first and the first last.
 - Heaven – a place where there is fullness of joy.
 - David said in Psalm 16:11 – in your presence is fullness of joy.
- The reality is friends, we go through this life, and I believe God gives us glimpses of heaven.
 - You hold you newborn child you see a sunset.
 - You achieve something in business.
 - You fall in love (this is not the order of course).
 - But in all these experiences – something inside you fills with joy.

But then that child spits up on you, the sunset fades, and the next deal doesn’t work out – your dream man disappoints.

- And you wonder why – why I am not fulfilled, why am I not happy.

Because God has created you for another place, and it seems precious church like we are the first generation not to understand that.

- We are looking for happiness here in this life only.
 - And so we do everything we can to amass things here.
 - We try everything we can to extend this life.
 - We grieve when young men and women die, saying what a tragedy they died so young, so much life to live.

- Because we miss the reality of heaven – that what we are looking for here, will be found and will only be found there – fullness of joy.
- Heaven will not be sitting on a cloud playing a harp or an endless church service – it will be the fulfillment of everything you have been longing for in the core of your soul.
- So let heaven be not just a destination but a motivation for the rest of your life – What will your eternal state be???
- Heaven or Hell.
- It is my job to tell you the truth; it is your job to make a decision.

Some of you are headed to heaven.

Some of you have put yourself under the Wrath of God.

- Because He is just, He will judge sin.
- Because He is loving and merciful, and graciously He sent Jesus to bear that wrath, to bear your sin.

But if you refuse Jesus you will be justly dealt with in the Wrath of God and you will have no one to blame but yourself.

- The message is not popular, but it is the Truth, and I love God and I love you, and it is my job to tell you the truth!