

“HEAVEN AND HELL”

Biblical Teaching on the Final States

Robert V. Cupp  
(Winter, 2018)

BiLD Training Center  
Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas

---

name

---

phone/email

Death, Be Not Proud  
(Holy Sonnet 10)

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou are not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of the bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou'art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy'or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

(John Donne, published 1633)

## OUTLINE

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS
- III. THEOLOGICAL QUESTION: “What Happens When People Die?”
- IV. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE
- V. HEAVEN
- VI. HELL
- VII. CONCLUSION

© 2018 Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas  
BiLD Training Center

Scriptures taken from NIV unless otherwise noted THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Use by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Curriculum may be copied and used for personal and ministry purposes, as long as content remains unchanged.

## HEAVEN AND HELL

“If a man dies, will he live again?”  
(Job in Job 14:14)

“I am not afraid of death; I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”  
(Woody Allen)

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Reason for the Study

Man has questioned his existence (and what happens when he dies) for as long as man has questioned the universe.

Is death the end of existence or is there more? Philosophers, scientists, writers, and even theologians have all suggested answers, but who knows what lies beyond the grave?

For people of Biblical faith there is assurance that existence extends beyond death, yet there seems to be a fog of confusion as to what the Bible really teaches (or does not teach).

A recent book (David Crowder) captured the angst of many people. The title is *Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die*. So true. He suggests, “right now we exist somewhere between here and there...none of us is getting out of here alive...death is not the ultimate calamity” (Crowder, 10).

King Solomon (near the end of his life) penned the somber book, Ecclesiastes. It's a book filled with reflections of a man who tasted all that life had to offer and found it wanting. In a brief philosophical interlude, he declared,

“There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die...”

(Eccl. 3:1-2<sup>a</sup>)

A modern would-be philosopher has wryly noted, “One out of one dies.” But even this “astute” observer can offer no answer to the question, “Then what?”.

This study will explore what the Scriptures have to say about death, about continuing existence, about the only two Biblical options for life everlasting.

## **B. Popular Misconceptions**

1. After death there is nothing.

Death is the end of life and existence. There is no afterlife, no judgment, no heaven, no hell (“Naturalism” or “Materialism”).

2. After death there is heaven for all.

Universalism suggests that in the fullness of time all souls will be restored to God; there is no eternal punishment (though there may be a time of limited punishment for some).

3. After death there is the becoming one with the One (i.e. the ultimate reality, the universe).

This is a major tenet of eastern mysticism (basically Hinduism/Buddhism).

4. After death there is transition to the experience of cosmic consciousness, a new stage of existence (New Age Spirituality).
5. After death there is no way of knowing what happens.

A man said to the universe:

“Sir, I exist.”

“However,” replied the universe,

“The fact has not created in me a sense of obligation.”

(Stephen Crane in 1899)

### **C. Presuppositions before the Study**

1. A Biblical study on “Heaven and Hell” presupposes that we must answer two preparatory questions:
  - a. Is man indissolvable, unitary, and monistic (no parts, only oneness)?
  - or
  - b. Is man complex, integrated self with material (body) and immaterial (soul-spirit) unity (integrated parts within a whole)?

2. Further, a Biblical study on “Heaven and Hell” must address whether or not man is accountable to Someone for the condition of his life.
  - a. Is man a fallen creature, less than the original creation intent?
  - b. Is man liable for his fallen (or sinful) state? To Whom? How much?
  - c. Does man’s present (fallen) condition in life make him unfit for the next life (or condemn him to a specific, next life)? (Original sin? Imputed sin?)

Our Premise:

Man is complex, integrated materiality and immateriality. The body will die (and await bodily resurrection); the soul-spirit lives on.

Man has inherited sin, imputed sin, and commits personal sin. He is fallen and separated from God.

Man’s destiny lies in his acceptance or rejection of God’s provision of Christ’s death on the Cross. This is the faith-decision.

## II. BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

### A. Death

Death is “the cessation of physical life” (Erickson, Dictionary, 41). Physical death is the irreversible cessation of all heart and circulatory functions, all lung and respiratory functions, and all brain functions.

The primary theological thought about death is separation – be it physical death or spiritual. It is the separation of two things God intended to be joined. Thus, for physical death, James 2:26 NLT notes, “Just as the body is dead without a spirit...” i.e. two things that God intended to be joined together, yet are now separate.

## **B. Intermediate State**

The Intermediate State is “the situation of those people who have died and who now await the future resurrection” (Grenz, et al. 67).

It is “the condition of persons between the time of their death and resurrection” (Erickson, Dictionary, 85).

The Intermediate State has different aspects dependent upon whether the deceased is a redeemed believer or unrighteous (sinful) unbeliever. Immediately upon death the believer enters the presence of God; this could be called Intermediate Heaven (as distinct from New Heavens and New Earth – Rev. 21-22). The unbeliever enters a Waiting Place of Torment until the Final Judgment (Lake of Fire – Rev. 20:10).

## **C. Heaven**

Heaven is “the future abode of believers. A place of complete happiness and joy, it is distinguished especially by the presence of God” (Erickson, Dictionary, 72).



Apart from cosmological concerns, heaven can be seen as the abode of God (Gen. 28:17) and future home of all deceased believers. In a sense, then, heaven is a Person (presence of God) and a future place for believers (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:1).

#### **D. Hell**

Hell is “the place of future punishment of wicked or unbelieving persons; it is a place of great anguish from which God is totally absent” (Erickson, Dictionary, 73).

Dante’s Inferno imagines a sign above the gate to hell that reads, “Abandon every hope, you who enter here” (Dante Alighieri, Inferno, canto 3, line 9).

“Generally speaking the word ‘hell’ is used in Scripture to refer to a place of future punishment for the wicked dead. However, there are other meanings (for the word, ‘hell’) also...the grave, the place of the dead” (Lightner, EDT, 506).

### **III. THEOLOGICAL QUESTION: “What Happens When People Die?”**

Job asks, “If a man dies, will he live again?” (Job 14:14).

#### **A. Death**

1. Nature of man
  - a. Created as a complex, integrated, wholistic, unified person.
  - b. Created Material (physical) and Immaterial (non-physical).

(1) Described: In Innocence (Before Sin)

(a) Genesis 2:7 NASB

*Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

(b) The “dust” (physical particles of the earth) provided the material.

(c) The “breath of life” (spiritual life in the inner man) provided the immaterial.

(2) Described: After Sin

(a) 2 Corinthians 4:16 NASB

*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

(b) Death and decay are the result of sin.

(c) Sin affects man’s material and immaterial aspects.

c. Created originally not to die, but the entrance of sin brought “death” to all humanity (cf. Ro. 3:10-11, 23, and others).

2. The three deaths in the Scriptures

a. Physical death: separation of body and soul-spirit

b. Spiritual death: relational separation of sinful man from God

c. Eternal death: final, unending separation of unbelieving man from God

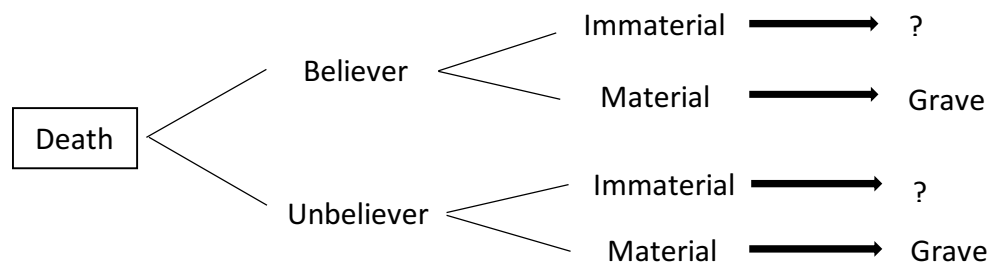
## The Three Eschatological “Deaths”

Kinds of Death	Commonality	Extent	Remedy
Physical Death	Separation of 2 things God intended to be joined (Gen. 3:2-3,19)	All mankind except Enoch, Elijah, believers alive at Christ's return	Resurrection
Spiritual Death	Same	All mankind (Except Christ)	Gift of Eternal Life (Ro. 6:23)
Eternal Death (Second Death)	Same	All unbelievers (No exceptions)	None

(Taken from Cupp, We Believe, 348)

### 3. Physical death

- a. Separation of the immaterial (soul-spirit)  
from the material (body)
- b. Departure of the soul from this life



## **B. After Death: Seven Inadequate Options**

### 1. Immortality of the soul

a. Defined: while the soul is immortal, the body is not; there is no future resurrection of the body.

b. Discussed:

An adherent, the Twentieth Century theologian, Shailer Mathews, suggests:

“Immortality in the Christian sense...means a new birth upward; a new advance; a new stage of human evolution; a freer and more complete spiritual personality.”

(Lewis and Demarest, 3:446)

Thus, the personality survives but not the body. Since the Kingdom to come is spiritual only (in this view), then at death all have a spiritual resurrection. Therefore, there is no Second Coming, but “resurrections” are continuous and successive as men die from age to age.

## 2. Purgatory

### a. Defined:

- (1) Catholic Encyclopedia: “Purgatory is the intermediate state of unknown duration in which those who die imperfect, but not in unrepentant mortal sin, undergo a course of penal purification, to qualify for admission to heaven. They share in the communion of the saints and are benefited by our prayers and good works” (quoted by Lewis and Demarest, 3:448).
- (2) Protestant Dictionary: “In Catholic eschatology, a place to which persons go upon death who are neither sufficiently holy to go directly to heaven, nor sufficiently evil to be permanently assigned to hell. Through a process of purifying experiences, they will be prepared for heaven” (Erickson, Dictionary, 137).

### b. Described:

For Roman Catholics (and some Anglo-Catholics), souls die in a state of grace but short of sinless perfection. Before being admitted to heaven these sins must be “purged” (penal and purifying sufferings).

Since some sins are more serious, more grievous than others, the duration and intensity of purgatory varies.

Purgatory time can be affected by the effectual prayers of the saints, masses, payment of indulgences, papal absolutions (2 Macc. 12:39-45; Mal. 3:2-3; Lk. 12:59; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; Jude 23).

### 3. Conditional Immortality/Annihilationism

- a. Defined: “conditional immortality”:
  - (1) Adam/Eve: if the first parents had lived righteously, obediently, sinlessly (thus a condition), then they (potentially) would have lived forever.
  - (2) Fallen humanity: because of sin, man is no longer able to live forever, the penalty of sin being death. However, believers become immortal through regeneration.

- b. Discussed:

While all men are subject to the finality of death, believers become immortal through their conversion. Unbelievers at death cease to exist. For conditionalists eternal torment is incompatible with divine love.

This leads to the “annihilationism” position (which follows).

- c. Defined: “annihilationism”:  
“the belief that at least some humans will permanently cease to exist at death or some point thereafter” (Erickson, Dictionary, 12).

d. Discussed:

In this classic view, all persons are created immortal, all survive beyond death, and all are resurrected.

The unrepentant will eventually (perhaps after a time of punishment) be destroyed, thus total extinction. Modern proponents of this Christian view include John R.W. Stott and Clark Pinnock.

4. Soul-Sleep

a. Defined: At death a person remains in an unconscious state (“sleep”) until the time of resurrection.

b. Discussed:

The belief comes from the metaphorical descriptions in the Bible referring to death as sleep.

Early Christians called church graveyards “coemeteria” (sleeping places for the dead). The soul-sleep argument was generally premised upon:

- (1) Monistic view of man’s nature (simple unity rather than complex material/immaterial).
- (2) Scriptural references to death as sleep (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51).
- (3) Wrong assumption that if people died and immediately went into God’s presence for their reward, then no need

for the Second Coming or Judgment Day.

- (4) Reaction to rise of spiritualism (mediums and contact with the dead) and its rightly perceived dangers.

## 5. Further Probation

- a. Defined: probation is “the idea that our life on earth is a period of preparation for the life beyond” (Erickson, Dictionary, 134).

- b. Described:

Death is not the end of faith-choices.

This view sees a second chance (a further test) to believe after death. For these adherents, salvation is available either side of the grave, that at the Last Judgment there will be a final opportunity to believe.

Proponents use the following scriptures to attempt to validate their claims:

Isaiah 26:19;

John 5:25-29;

Ephesians 4:8;

1 Peter 3:19, 20; 4:6

Among notables who held to a form of “Further Probation” are Franz Delitzche, Frederick Godet, FW Farrar, Dale Moody, Clark Pinnock.

## 6. Instantaneous Resurrection

- a. Defined: “the doctrine that immediately upon death we will receive our future body.



There is, then, no future bodily resurrection” (Erickson, Dictionary, 84).

b. Described:

This view is compatible with Monism, the simple indissoluble view of man’s nature. Since man is one (body-soul unity), at death man ceases to exist without an immediate resurrection of the body-soul oneness.

This fails to give prominence to the evangelical idea of a physical, bodily resurrection. A physical resurrection is needed for a physical place. (Note the further development in the section, “Heaven”).

7. Absorption into the Whole

This is the view that at death the self is absorbed into or united with the Infinite (however conceived, usually impersonal). There is no individualistic consciousness; there is no soul-person to survive independently.

Much Confusion:

“Death is such a rude and implacable intruder that strong group-opinion about death, long held, of whatever origin...are not fully erased by Christian revelation. The superstitions of pagan Europe did not disappear when Christianity replaced the heathen religions. They are still alive and well even in sophisticated circles.”

(Culver, 1031)

#### IV. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

##### A. Defined:

The Intermediate State is the conscious existence of the soul between death and resurrection. This could also be called Intermediate Heaven (as opposed to Final Heavens and Earth – see Rev. 21-22).

##### B. Description:

###### 1. For believers

While there is limited Biblical data to describe the Intermediate State, it appears that for believers:

###### a. Personal identity continues.

Matthew 17:1-3

*After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.<sup>2</sup> There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.<sup>3</sup> Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.*

- Moses and Elijah are identified by name.
- Moses had died (Elijah had not) and yet was present.

- b. Immaterial (soul-spirit) part of man  
departs from the Material (body) at  
death.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

*...and the dust returns to the ground it came  
from, and the spirit returns to God who  
gave it.*

Philippians 1:23

*I am torn between the two: I desire to  
depart and be with Christ, which is better by  
far...*

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

*Therefore we are always confident and  
know that as long as we are at home in the  
body we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we  
live by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are  
confident, I say, and would prefer to be  
away from the body and at home with the  
Lord.*

- Note that Paul expects at death to  
be ushered into the presence of  
Christ.

Excursis:

Since at death the soul-spirit (Immaterial) departs from the body (Material), does this mean that the believing dead are completely spirit without any kind of a transitional, body-like existence? We do know that at the resurrection we will receive our permanent, perfect resurrection body

(1 Cor. 15:50-57). But what about the Intermediate State? What about Intermediate Heaven: is it real? Does it exist in some kind of space/time universe? Consider the following.

Stephen being stoned **saw** into heaven with Jesus at the right hand of God (Acts 7); Elisha asked God to open his servant's eyes to **see** angelic warriors on horses (2 Kgs. 6). Jesus went to prepare a **place** and promised to return and take His disciples to that **place**, "that **where I am** you may be also" (Jn. 14).

Wayne Grudem suggests concerning this Intermediate Heaven that it "is now a place – though one whose location is now unknown to us and whose existence is now unable to be perceived by our natural senses" (Grudem, 1160). Referring to Stephen's experience, Grudem suggests that Stephen "did not see mere symbols of a state of existence. It seems rather that his eyes were opened to see a spiritual dimension of reality which God has hidden from us in this present age, a dimension which none the less really does exist in our space/time universe and within which Jesus now lives in his physical resurrection body..." (Grudem, 1159-60).

Alcorn suggests that perhaps we will have temporary bodies for Intermediate Heaven which are temporary vessels only, distinct from our natural bodies, yet which remain until our resurrection where we receive our incorruptible bodies.

- c. The Immaterial enters the presence of Christ who is at the right hand of God the Father.

1 Peter 3:21<sup>b</sup>-22

*It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

John 14:1-3

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

- d. The believer in Intermediate Heaven is in an alert state:
- Conscious of being with Christ (Phil. 1:21)
  - Conscious of being safe and secure at home with Christ (2 Tim. 4:18; Ps. 73:23-25)
  - Conscious of divine love (Ro. 8:38-39; Ps. 23:6)
- e. The believer in the Intermediate State is morally perfect without any taint or trace of sin. In this state, there is:
- No sin
  - No temptation
  - No Tempter

- No corrupted flesh

2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT

*So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*

1 John 3:2 NLT

*Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.*

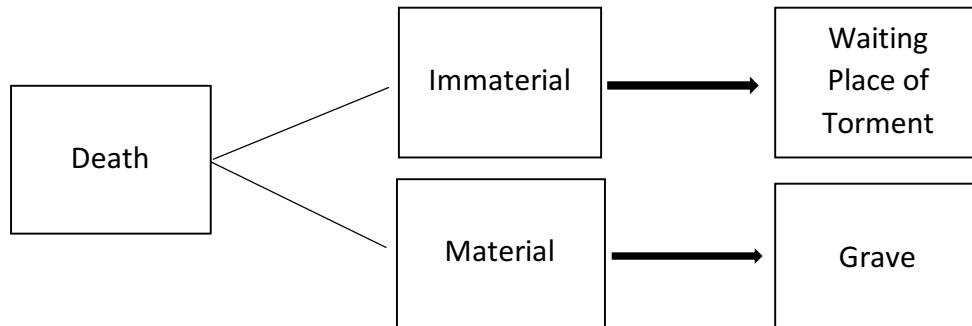
- f. The believer in Intermediate Heaven will be conscious of God’s people, a community of faith.

Genesis 25:7-8

*Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. <sup>8</sup> Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.*

(See also Rev. 21:3-4; redeemed people with God and by implication with one another)

- 2. For unbelievers
  - a. Charted



- b. The unbeliever will not have a second chance for redemption.

Hebrews 9:27 NLT

*And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment,*

- c. The unbeliever will not be instantly annihilated nor cease to exist (cf. Rev. 14:11; also note 20:10).
- d. The unbeliever will be “in torment awaiting judgment” (Frame, 1078).

### C. Significant Biblical Passages

#### 1. Luke 16:19-31

*“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.<sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores<sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.<sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to **Abraham’s side**. The rich man also died and was buried.<sup>23</sup> In **Hades**, where he*

*was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.<sup>24</sup> So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'<sup>25</sup> "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in **agony**.<sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a **great chasm** has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'<sup>27</sup> "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family,<sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this **place of torment**.'<sup>29</sup> "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'<sup>30</sup> "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'<sup>31</sup> "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

- a. At death, there is a place/state where both righteous and unrighteous are found.
- b. At that place/state, there is a chasm of separation of righteous from unrighteous.
- c. At that place/state, the unrighteous are "in torment" and "in agony." This is a state of painful consciousness.
- d. At that place/state there is no escape, no second chance, no hope of reversal.



“Jesus taught that the destiny of the unbelieving, whether religious or nonreligious, is an endless, agonizing exclusion from his presence” (Lewis and Demarest, 3:479).

Insight:

The Waiting Place of Torment is not the eternal, final place of punishment. The Lake of Fire (Rev. 20) is the final place for the unbeliever’s eternal suffering. “The meaning of hell includes intermediate and eternal states separated from Christ’s presence with degrees of retributive justice proportional to unforgiven sins” (Lewis and Demarest, 3:479).

2. Hebrews 9:27

*Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...*

- a. Death comes to all.
- b. Judgment comes to all, yet for the believer, “Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Ro. 8:1).
- c. The temporary Waiting Place of Torment will eventually be replaced by the eternal Lake of Fire. However, in both places for the unrighteous, it is conscious, painful torment and agony.

**V. HEAVEN**

**A. Defined**

Refer again to the brief definitions in Section II. Consider, also, that the Biblical term, “heaven” or “heavens”, has a wide range of meaning. This will be seen in the following “Lexical Study.”

## **B. Lexical Study**

### 1. Hebrew (OT)

The ancient word for “heavens” is the Hebrew, *shamayim*, which signified “the heights” or “heaved up things” (Grider, EDT, 499).

Heaven (based upon the contextual usage) could refer to one of three heavens:

#### a. Cosmological heaven

This refers to the whole of creation, i.e. the entire universe.

Genesis 1:1

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

(merism: heavens and earth = totality/all)

Matthew 5:18 and 11:25 give the same sense to understanding heaven in this way.

#### b. Firmament heaven

This refers to the “skies” above us, the place of stars in the heavens above, the place also where birds fly (Matt. 6:26), lightning flashes (Lk. 17:24), and rain falls (Lk. 4:25).

c. Third heaven

The Apostle Paul spoke of a unique experience that he had in “third” heaven.

2 Corinthians 12:1-2

*I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the **third heaven**. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.*

- Note that this heaven is the abode of God.
- Note, also, Paul’s uncertainty of whether he was bodily present or simply being given a true vision and revelation of third heaven.

That the “third heaven” is the dwelling place of God is further described in these passages:

Matthew 6:9-10

*“This, then, is how you should pray:  
“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup> your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.”*

John 3:13

*No one has ever gone into heaven except*

*the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.*

2. Greek (NT)

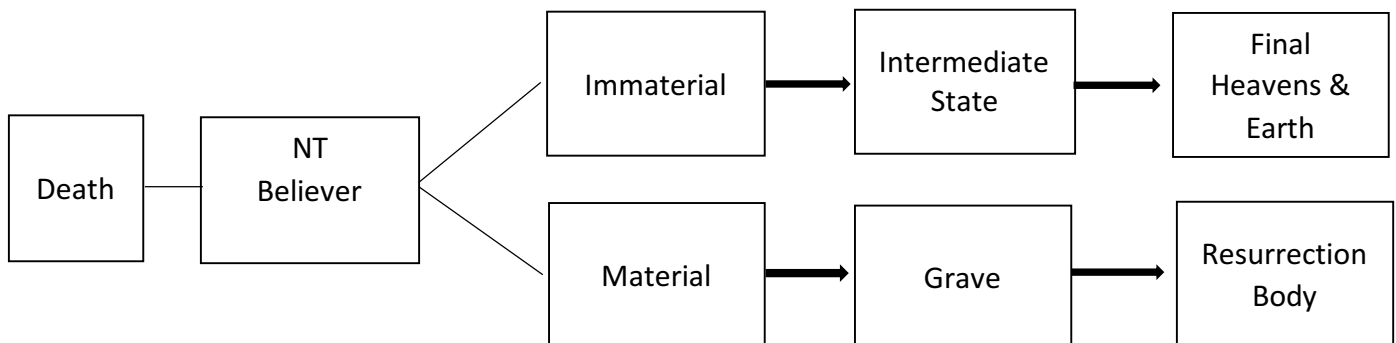
The Biblical word in Greek is “ouranos” and mirrors the basic usage of the OT. The New Testament writers were schooled in the Hebrew Scriptures and took much of their understanding from them. Therefore, the NT assumes and advances the OT concept of heaven (as demonstrated in the above NT references).

Insight:

Not only does the word “heaven” mean the places described above in three heavens, the word heaven can also be used synonymously for God. With Jewish reluctance to speak the name of God, often heaven was substituted for God’s name thus the kingdom of heaven (or God). Also, consider that the Prodigal Son confessed that he had “sinned against heaven (God) and you (his father).” Jesus in conflict with the argumentative chief priests and elders asked, “John’s baptism – where did it come from? Was it from heaven (God) or men?”

**C. Theological Distinctions**

1. Charted



## 2. Intermediate State

Refer to the previous discussion, IV. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE. Some refer to this as “Intermediate Heaven,” that place/state between death and resurrection. Some scholars (e.g. Wayne Grudem, Randy Alcorn, others) believe that “Intermediate Heaven” is a place (not simply a state) and that believers will have some kind of a temporary, body-like vessel whereby we can relate to the place. If so, this would be a body-bridge between our old physical body (in the grave) and our someday resurrection body (in the future).

## 3. Final Heavens and Earth

The “Intermediate State” is not our forever home. The Scriptures speak of a coming day of the “new heavens and earth.”

Isaiah 66:22

*“As the **new heavens and the new earth** that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure...”*

2 Peter 3:11-13

*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a **new heaven and a new earth**, where righteousness dwells.*

Revelation 21:1-3

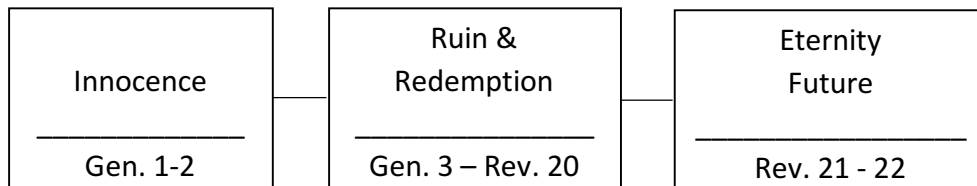
*Then I saw “**a new heaven and a new earth,**” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

*<sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the **new Jerusalem,** coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

*<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”*

Insight:

The story of the Bible is the story of wayward humanity. It is the ultimate “epic tale” of innocence, ruin, and redemption. Consider this:



In the first two chapters of the Bible, mankind is in the Garden in a state of innocence. The following chapters and Biblical books chronicle the fall of man and God’s gracious redemptive program. The final two chapters reveal that redeemed man will end in a “garden-like” physical environment, a new heavens and new earth, a new Jerusalem, thus a new beginning (for all eternity).

#### **D. Descriptions of Heaven**

Noting again, “heaven” is a broad term used widely in the Scriptures, nonetheless it particularly is used of (1) Intermediate Heaven (between death and

resurrection) and (2) Final Heaven (or New Heavens and Earth). Often, it is problematic for the interpreter to discern which of the “heavens” is being described. However, what is clear is that heaven is described as a place, not a state of mind. Geisler describes heaven as:

1. A place better than present earth

Philippians 1:21-24 NLT (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8)

*For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.<sup>22</sup> But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better.<sup>23</sup> I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.<sup>24</sup> But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.*

2. A place without the curse of sin (nor even a taint of sin)

Romans 8:18-23

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.<sup>19</sup> For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.<sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we*

*wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.*

3. A place devoid of sickness (Rev. 21:4; 22:2), death (Rev. 21:4; 1 Cor. 15:53-54) and the sorrows of this world (Rev. 21:4).
4. A place of incredible beauty

1 Corinthians 2:9 (cf. Rev. 21:18-21)

*However, as it is written:*

*“What no eye has seen,*

*what no ear has heard,*

*and what no human mind has conceived”—*

*the things God has prepared for those who love him...*

Further, Scripture describes a place of worship, service, abundance of life, and joy inexpressible. It is a place where God’s glory and honor are present. It is a place of worship. The hymn writer captured a glimpse of this in the following (as quoted by Grudem, 1167):



“The Sands of Time Are Sinking”

The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks,  
The summer morn I’ve sighed for, the fair sweet morn awakes;  
Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel’s land.

The king there in his beauty without a veil is seen;  
It were a well-spent journey though sev’n deaths lay between:  
The Lamb with his fair army doth on Mount Zion stand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel’s land.

O Christ, he is the fountain, the deep sweet well of love!  
The streams on earth I’ve tasted, more deep I’ll drink above:  
There to an ocean fullness his mercy doth expand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel’s land.

The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom’s face;  
I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace;  
Not at the crown he giveth, but on his pierced hand:  
The lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel’s land.

AUTHOR: ANNE R. COUSIN, 1857

**E. Faulty Assumptions About Heaven**

One of the most insightful books on the topic is R. Alcorn’s Heaven. In this volume Alcorn gives clarity to what the Bibles says about “heaven” and speculates what it could be like (based upon reason and the Scriptures). One thoughtful section contrasts our “assumptions” of what heaven will be like as opposed to what the Word reveals about heaven. Note the contrasts as given by Alcorn (155):

WHAT WE ASSUME ABOUT HEAVEN	WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HEAVEN
Non-Earth	New Earth
Unfamiliar; otherworldly	Familiar; earthly
Disembodied	Resurrected (embodied)
Foreign	Home (all the comforts of home with all the innovations of an infinitely creative God)
Leaving favorite things behind	Retaining the good; finding the best ahead
No time and space	Time and space
Static	Dynamic
Neither old (like Eden) nor new and earthly; just strange and unknown	Both old and new
Nothing to do; floating on clouds	A God to worship and serve; a universe to rule; purposeful work to accomplish; friends to enjoy
No learning or discovery; instant and complete knowledge	An eternity of learning and discovering
Boring	Fascinating
Loss of desire	Continuous fulfillment of desire
Absence of the terrible (but presence of little we desire)	Presence of the wonderful (everything we desire and nothing we don't)

## F. Implications of Heaven (for Contemplation)

1. Heaven will be an environment unsullied by moral evil (cf. Rev.21:8, 27; 22:15). There will be no evidence of sin, no temptation to sin, no willingness to sin. Hitchcock quotes S. Lawson in a creative list of “no mores” when we are in heaven:

“There will be no funeral homes, no hospitals, no abortion clinics, no divorce courts, no brothels, no bankruptcy courts, no psychiatric wards, and no treatment centers.

There will be no pornography, dial-a-porn, no teen suicide, no AIDS, no cancer, no talk shows, no rape, no missing children...no drug problems, no drive-by shootings, no racial tension, and no prejudice.

There will be no misunderstandings, no injustice, no depression, no hurtful words, no gossip, no hurt feelings, no worry, no emptiness, and no child abuse.

There will be no wars, no financial worries, no emotional heartaches, no physical pain, no spiritual flatness, no relational divisions, no murders, and no casseroles.

There will be no tears, no suffering, no separations, no starvation, no arguments, no accidents, no emergency departments, no doctors, no nurses, no heart monitors, no rust, no perplexing questions, no false teachers, no financial shortages, no hurricanes, no bad habits, no decay, and no locks.

We will never need to confess sin. Never need to apologize again. Never need to straighten out a strained relationship. Never

have to resist Satan again. Never have to resist temptation.

Never!”

2. Heaven will be an environment of Biblical “shalom.” This Hebrew word translated as “peace” speaks of more than simply cessation of war. Biblical “shalom” (from the OT prophets’ point of view) described a time when God would make all things right, life as it always was meant to be.

“Shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights.” (Plantinga, 10). Or, as Plantinga later puts it, “Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.”

Many scholars believe that the state of “Shalom” was anticipated to be the promised environment of the Millennial Kingdom. The people of Israel longed for that day and the promised Davidic Kingdom. Yet, even in the kingdom, while justice and prosperity would characterize the King’s reign, the presence of personal sin would still be a reality.

Therefore, only in Final Heaven, in the place of the New Heavens and Earth, would perfect shalom one day exist on earth. Resurrected believers will live in resurrection bodies on a

physically remade earth...all in complete, satisfying, shalom-peace.

3. Heaven will be an environment for everlasting fellowship with other believers. There will be a true community of the redeemed, a “communion of the saints.” It will be a place for laughter, joy, and rich fellowship. And our common bond will be our relationship with our Eternal God and our joint worship of Him.

Revelation 21:3-4 NLT

*I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.”<sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”*

4. Heaven will be an environment of lifestyle, lifelong (eternal) worship of the Triune Godhead. For once we are cleansed from all presence of sin, once we are at home in our perfect, resurrection bodies, then for the very first time we will be able to fully, purely exalt, praise and worship our God. We will join the chorus to proclaim:

Revelation 4:8<sup>b</sup>

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”*

Revelation 4:11

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*

Revelation 7:12

*“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!*

Insight:

Consider the implications of worship in the New Heavens and Earth. If worship is a recognition of who God is and an appropriate response, then how will that be gloriously magnified in our future worship of the King? Remember, in that day “we will see him as he really is” (1 Jn. 3:2<sup>b</sup> NLT).

## **G. Properties of our Resurrection Bodies**

### **1. Intermediate Heaven Body**

As discussed earlier, some theologians posit that between death and resurrection, believers enter “intermediate heaven.” Further, it is suggested by some that the believer will have a temporary body or form (or vessel) until such time of the resurrection. At that time the soul-spirit is united to the new resurrection body which will last throughout eternity.

Alcorn observes, “There is evidence that suggests the latter position (i.e. a form or intermediate heaven body of some sort) could

be correct. For instance, the martyrs in Heaven are described as wearing clothes (Rev. 6:9-11). Disembodied spirits don't wear clothes" (Alcorn, 58).

He concludes,

"We do *not* receive resurrection bodies immediately after death. Resurrection is not one-at-a-time. If we have intermediate forms in the Intermediate Heaven, they won't be our true bodies, which have died. Continuity is *only* between our original and resurrection bodies. *If* we are given intermediate forms, they are at best temporary vessels (comparable to the human-appearing bodies that angels sometimes take on), distinct from our true bodies, which remain dead until our resurrection" (59).

## 2. Resurrection Body

- a. It will be imperishable, full of glory, powerful, and spiritual.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NLT

*It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. <sup>43</sup> Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in **glory**. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in **strength**. <sup>44</sup> They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as **spiritual** bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.*

- (1) Frame (1079) asserts, “I do expect that, like Jesus’ body, our resurrection bodies might have powers that they do not now have.”
  - (2) Spiritual may mean perfectly directed by the Holy Spirit...spiritually focused. Remember, it is a real body though a resurrection body. Also, it is possible that the physical body then will also have some unknown metaphysical properties (such as Jesus’ resurrection body).
- b. It will be a physical, space-time body fit for the New Heavens and New Earth, capable of living with and in God’s presence.

Revelation 21:3-4 NLT

*I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live **with them**, and they will be his people. God himself will be **with them**.<sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”*

- c. It will be a body yet without sexual activity.

Matthew 22:30 NLT

*For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven.*



Frame elaborates, it will not be “a time of lesser intimacy, but greater: intimacy with God and with other members of his body” (1079).

Likely, then, we will share a deep communion with other believers without the sexual drive or temptation. We will be able to share ourselves with others more fully, more openly without fear, suspicion, or envy. We shall be drawn to one another, not alienated from one another.

d. It will be a body like (similar but not perfectly identical to) Jesus’ resurrection body.

(1) The Immaterial (soul-spirit) and Material (new body) will be reunited into a new resurrection body.

1 John 3:2-3 NLT

*Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be **like him**, for we will see him as he really is.<sup>3</sup> And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.*

Philippians 3:20-21 NLT

*But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.<sup>21</sup> He will take our weak mortal*

*bodies and change them into glorious bodies **like his own**, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.*

(2) Chart: contrast of Jesus' "Old Physical Body" and the "New Resurrection Body" (adapted from Lewis and Demarest).

JESUS' BODIES	
Old Physical Body	New Resurrection Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible, audible, touchable</li> <li>• Can eat food</li> <li>• Had scars of crucifixion</li> <li>• Could <u>not</u> suddenly appear or rise in air</li> <li>• Could not escape aging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible, audible, touchable</li> <li>• Can eat food</li> <li>• Had scars of crucifixion</li> <li>• Could suddenly appear and arise in air</li> <li>• Will escape aging</li> </ul>

e. It will have continuity between the old body and the new.

1 Corinthians 15:35-41

*But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"<sup>36</sup> How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.<sup>37</sup> When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.<sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.<sup>39</sup> Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and*

*fish another.* <sup>40</sup> *There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.* <sup>41</sup> *The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.*

Lewis and Demarest suggests that there will be joy over our resurrection bodies, that we will be recognizable to other fellow believers. Further, they suggest we will retain our gender, ethnicity, and recognizability.

We will enjoy heightened senses, a part of having a physical body. “We’ll stand on the New Earth and see it, feel it, smell it, taste its fruits, and hear its sounds. Not figuratively. Literally.” (Alcorn, 282)

## **VI. HELL**

The topic of hell is a disturbing one. Frame agrees, “If I were free to invent my own religion, I can assure you that eternal punishment would not be part of it...because I am not free to invent my own religion, I must teach only what the Bible teaches...” (1081).

Opponents of the doctrine (Biblical teaching) have called it “cruel and barbarous.” Some question its existence, others its justice. Yet as Geisler has noted, Jesus “had more to say about hell than he did about heaven” (4:330).

### **A. Defined**

“Hell is the place of future punishment of wicked or unbelieving persons; it is a place of great anguish from which God is totally absent” (Erickson, Dictionary, 73).

## B. Lexical Terms

1. “Sheol” is a Hebrew word for hell commonly translated “the grave” or “the pit” (death).

Job 17:13-16

*“If the only home I hope for is the **grave**,  
if I spread out my bed in the realm of  
darkness,*

<sup>14</sup> *if I say to corruption, ‘You are my father,’  
and to the worm, ‘My mother’ or ‘My sister,’*

<sup>15</sup> *where then is my hope—*

*who can see any hope for me?*

<sup>16</sup> *Will it go down to the gates of **death**?*

*Will we descend together into the dust?”*

It can also refer to the place of the dead (both good and bad; cf. Gen 37:35; Job 14:13; Num. 16:33; Ps. 55:15; Prov. 9:18).

Thus, some believe “sheol” had two compartments (a part for good; a part for bad – cf. Lk. 16:19-31 and the parable of Lazarus and the rich man). Others believe that “sheol” had a double meaning, either the grave (i.e. death) or hell, the place of torment (see Lightner, “Hell” in EDT, 506).

2. “Hades” is the NT Greek word that roughly parallels the meaning of sheol (and in the LXX,

translates the Hebrew, “sheol,” to Greek, “hades”).

In the NT “hades” can refer to “the underworld, the region of the departed. It defines an intermediate state between death and the future resurrection” (Lightner, 506).

“Hades” in the NT is commonly translated “hell” in many English translations (particularly the KJV).

3. “Gehenna” in OT means “the valley of Hinnom,” a deep wadi (or ravine) somewhat south of the temple mount. It was the location of Jewish apostasy (Molech worship; 2 Kgs. 16:3; 21:6), later a place of burning refuse (and, later, an apt metaphor for “hell”). Gehenna came to mean the final state of the ungodly or unbelieving.
4. Other words for “hell” include “Tartarus” or “the Abyss.”

### **C. Descriptions of Hell**

1. Simple definition

“Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment” (Grudem, 1149).

2. Biblical passages

- a. Matthew 25:30 NLT  
*“Now throw this useless servant into **outer darkness**, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth.**”*
  
- b. Matthew 25:41 NLT  
*“Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his demons.’”*
  
- c. Mark 9:42-43 NLT  
*“But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck. <sup>43</sup> If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It’s better to enter eternal life with only one hand than to go into the **unquenchable fires of hell** with two hands.”*

Later in verse 48, this hell is described as a place “where the worm never dies and the fire never goes out” (9:48 NLT).

- d. Parable of rich man and Lazarus:  
 Luke 16:22-24  
*“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In **Hades**, where he was in **torment**, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water*

*and cool my tongue, because I am in **agony** in this **fire**.”*

e. Revelation 14: 9-11 NLT

*Then a third angel followed them, shouting, “Anyone who worships the beast and his statue or who accepts his mark on the forehead or on the hand<sup>10</sup> must drink the wine of **God’s anger**. It has been poured full strength into **God’s cup of wrath**. And they will be **tormented with fire and burning sulfur** in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb.<sup>11</sup> The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night, for they have worshiped the beast and his statue and have accepted the mark of his name.”*

Insight: Grudem (1150) summarizes:

“These verses should make us realize the immensity of the evil that is found in sin and rebellion against God, and the magnitude of the holiness and justice of God that calls forth this kind of punishment” (1150).

3. Disturbing images

- a. “Unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12, others)
- b. “Furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:42, 50)
- c. “Outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)
- d. “Eternal fire” (Matt. 25:41)
- e. “Lake of burning sulfur” (Rev. 20:10)
- f. “Lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14-15)
- g. “Blackest darkness” (Jude 13)

**D. Nature of Hell**

1. Hell is a literal reality.
  - a. It is not a state of mind.
  - b. It is not a temporary condition.
  - c. It is not an image; it is real and has a real existence.
2. Hell is the absence of God's goodness and grace.
3. Hell is a place of divine justice, not a torture chamber.

"However, unlike torture, which is inflicted from without against one's will, torment is self-inflicted by one's own will" (Geisler, 4:338).

"The door of hell is locked from the inside" (Geisler quoting Sarte, 4:338).

4. Hell is eternal, not temporal; forever settled, not escapable.

Hell will last as long as Heaven.

5. Hell is the place where evil and sin is quarantined forever.
6. Hell is a place of rebellious choice or passive indifference to God.

Geisler quotes C.S. Lewis (4:558):

There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "*Thy will*



be done.” All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock [the door] is opened.

7. Hell is the opposite direction away from God – the final separation (e.g. refer to C.S. Lewis’ “The Great Divorce”).

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 NLT

*And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels,<sup>8</sup> in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don’t know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power.*

#### **E. Theological Reasoning for Hell**

1. God’s justice demands a hell.

Geisler (4:334) quotes Jonathan Edwards:

“The eternal holy God cannot tolerate any sin. How much more, then, a multitude of daily sins in thought, word, and deed? This is all compounded by the fact that we reject God’s immense mercy. And add to this man’s readiness to find fault with God’s justice and mercy, and we have abundant evidence of the need for hell. [Therefore,] if we had a true

spiritual awareness we would not be amazed at hell's severity but at our own depravity."

2. God's punishment of sin requires a hell.

If there will be literal rewards in heaven (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10), then there must be equitable punishment for sins (Rev. 20:12).

3. Man's wages of sin (just reward for unrighteousness) requires a hell (cf. Ro. 1:21-23; Eccl. 7:29; Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:3; et al.).

a. Romans 6:23<sup>a</sup>

"For the wages of sin is death" (eternal separation, i.e. hell, the place of eternal quarantine).

b. Romans 6:23<sup>b</sup>

"But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

4. Man's dignity requires a hell.

Man is not a programmed robotic machine. He has been given moral responsibility to respond to God's grace (general and special revelation). God does not coerce people to heaven; God will allow people to choose (even if by default) hell.

**F. Reflections on Hell**

1. Hell is an emotionally disturbing doctrine (teaching).

The idea of eternal separation from God is almost unthinkable. That people will spend eternity in torment is painful to consider. Even the Apostle Paul struggled with the idea that his own people, unbelieving Israel would be confined to a Christ-less eternity. The inevitability of it moved him greatly.

Romans 9:1-3<sup>a</sup>

*I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people...*

2. If heaven is being with Christ forever; then, of course, hell is being apart from Christ forever.

Martin Luther (quoted by Alcorn, 181) avowed, “I had rather be in hell with Christ, than be in heaven without him.” This is our blessed hope – the presence of Christ. Wherever Christ is, that is where we long to be, where we must be.

Jesus (in His High Priestly Prayer) had this to say,

“Father, I want these who you’ve given me to be with me, so that they can see my glory...”

(Jn. 17:24<sup>a</sup> NLT).

The anguish of hell is the solitude of being away from God’s grace (common grace), compassion and presence.

3. Hell brings a sense of sorrow to the heart of God.

2 Peter 3:8-9

*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish**, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Ezekiel 33:10-11

*“Son of man, say to the Israelites, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’<sup>11</sup> Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, **I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked**, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’”*

4. Hell forces us to consider the character (and the will and ways) of God.

Does God have to send unbelieving people to hell? How can He not and retain His perfect justice and righteousness?

Could God ever act inappropriately, uncaringly, unrighteously? Can eternal conscious punishment be incompatible with the attributes of God as described in Scripture?

Grudem suggests that to deny deserved punishment would be a blemish upon the perfectly just God and limit His glory in His will and ways.

5. Hell demands consequences for choices made and lack of choices, for deeds done and left undone.

Consider the cry for cosmic justice of the martyred saints (during the Tribulation):

Revelation 6:9-11

*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. <sup>10</sup> They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" <sup>11</sup> Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.*

Revelation 19:1-4 NLT

*After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting, "Praise the LORD! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. <sup>2</sup> **His judgments are true and just.** He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. **He has avenged the murder of his servants.**" <sup>3</sup> And again their voices rang out: "Praise the LORD! The smoke from that city ascends forever and ever!" <sup>4</sup> Then the twenty-four elders and the four living beings*

*fell down and worshiped God, who was sitting on the throne. They cried out, "Amen! Praise the LORD!"*

6. Hell is finalized in the "lake of burning sulfur" (NIV) or "lake of fire" (NLT, others).

The Great White Throne judgment is the final court room of everlasting judgment.

Revelation 20:11-15

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*

- This is a judgment of all unbelieving dead (Dan. 7:9-10).
- The "book of life" records the names of all the redeemed (Dan. 12:1)...those who have put their faith in Christ.

- The redeemed are not judged for their sins (Ro. 8:1) but their service (2 Cor. 5:9-10).
  - Those unbelievers described as being in (the state of) Death and Hades (hell) are thrown into the “lake of fire” (20:13-14), a place prepared for the Devil and his fallen angels (Matt. 25:41).
7. Hell is a painful reality and can be a positive motivator.
- a. Hell is not a destination to aspire to.
  - b. Hell is a destination to avoid.
  - c. Hell is not the place reserved for believers, THEREFORE...
    - I must tell my story...
    - I must share the Gospel...
    - I must trust God to be God and to fulfill His greater will.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 NLT

*So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!”*  
<sup>21</sup> *For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

Our Prayer:

God use me to share the “Good News of the Gospel” to bring people to faith in You. Use me to help “populate Heaven and depopulate Hell.”

For Your Glory (alone)...

Amen

## VII. CONCLUSION

### A. Important Issue

*What will you do with Jesus?  
Neutral you cannot be.  
Someday your heart will be asking,  
What will He do with me?*  
(A.B. Simpson)

### B. Two Destinies

John 3:16-18

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him** shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> **Whoever believes in him** is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe** stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

John 3:36

***Whoever believes in the Son** has eternal life, but **whoever rejects the Son** will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.*

### C. Considerations

1. There is more to existence than the temporal life we have experienced.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 NLT

*And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your*



*sins. <sup>18</sup> In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! <sup>19</sup> And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.*

2. There is a certainty about death that must be realistically faced.

Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that there is “a time to be born and a time to die.”

In human history there have been only two exceptions: Enoch and Elijah. Beyond that, there have been none (save those alive at the future return of Christ).

Menninger Foundation psychologist (quoted by Frame, 493):

“the effort to escape the facing of death may constitute a deep source of ill health.”

Have you faced the inescapable?

3. There is a necessary preparation for impending death: get ready today for the inevitabilities of tomorrow.

We prepare ourselves for death “then” by the careful way we live “now.”

2 Corinthians 5:6-10 NLT

*So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we live by believing and not by seeing. <sup>8</sup> Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from*

*these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.*

2 Peter 3:11-13

*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

Insight:

As believers we should live every day as if Christ had died yesterday, arose today and was returning tomorrow.

4. There is a sober compassion that the people of God should have for those hurting, suffering, dying, and bereaving.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NLT

*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. <sup>4</sup> He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When*

*they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.*

Matthew 25:34-36

*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,<sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”*

5. There is an undeniable urgency to share the Gospel when one considers death and the resultant, eternal consequences.

Luke 19:41-44 NLT

*But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep.<sup>42</sup> “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes.<sup>43</sup> Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side.<sup>44</sup> They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you.”*

Romans 9:1-3 NLT

*With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit*

*confirm it.<sup>2</sup> My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief<sup>3</sup> for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.*

2 Corinthians 5:11<sup>a</sup>, 18-20

*Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.*

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:<sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. **We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.***

6. There is comfort in believing the sure word of the Scripture,  
    "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."  
    (Ro. 8:1)
7. Heaven or hell, there is a faith choice to be made.

*Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?<sup>36</sup> (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")<sup>37</sup> No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

<sup>38</sup> *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.*

<sup>39</sup> *No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Ro. 8:35-39 NLT)

**APPENDIX A**  
**SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Alcorn, Randy. Heaven. Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2004.

Barackman, Floyd H. Practical Christian Theology. Grand Rapids: Kregel 2001.

Cook, W. Robert. Theological Foundations: Chapter 54: The Eternal State. Dallas: Ancient Path Network, 2007.

Crowder, David. Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven But Nobody Wants to Die. Orlando: Relevant, 2006.

Culver, Robert Duncan. Systematic Theology. Great Britain: Mentor Imprint, 2006.

Cupp, Robert V. We Believe: Survey of Theology. Privately Published, BiLD Training Center, 2012.

Erickson, Millard J. Christian Theology, Third Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.

Erickson, Millard J. Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology. Grand Rapid: Baker, 1986.

Geisler, Norman L. Systematic Theology: Volume Four. Minneapolis: Bethany, 2005.

Frame, John M. Systematic Theology. Phillipsburg: P and R, 2013.

Grenz, Stanley J. and David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling. Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

Grider, J. K. "Heaven" in Walter A. Elwell, Ed. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Hitchcock, Mark. The End. Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2012.

Lewis, Gordon R. and Bruce A. Demarest. Integrative Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Lightner, R.P. "Hell" in Walter A. Elwell, Ed. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

Plantinga, Cornelius. Not the Way It's Supposed to Be. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Wilkin, Bob. "Clearing Up Confusion About Heaven and Hell." Grace in Focus Magazine. March/April 2017.

**APPENDIX B**  
**JESUS' TEACHING ON "HELL"**

Matthew 5:29-30

*If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.<sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into **hell**.*

Matthew 10:28

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in **hell**.*

Matthew 11:23

*And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to **Hades**. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.*

Matthew 13:40-41

*"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in **the fire**, so it will be at the end of the age.<sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil."*

Matthew 13:49-50

*This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous<sup>50</sup> and throw them into the **blazing furnace**, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*



Matthew 22:13

*“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the **darkness**, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

Matthew 23:15, 33

<sup>15</sup>*“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of **hell** as you are.*

<sup>33</sup>*“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to **hell**?”*

Matthew 25:41

*“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

Mark 9:43-48

*If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into **hell**, where the fire never goes out. <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into **hell**. <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into **hell**, <sup>48</sup> where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

Luke 12:5

*But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into **hell**. Yes, I tell you, fear him.*

Luke 16:19-31

*“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.<sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores<sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.<sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried.<sup>23</sup> In **Hades**, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.<sup>24</sup> So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’<sup>25</sup> “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.<sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’<sup>27</sup> “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family,<sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this **place of torment**.’<sup>29</sup> “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’<sup>30</sup> “‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’<sup>31</sup> “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”*

APPENDIX C

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

(VISUAL CHART)

