

The Basics of Christianity

Heaven

Revelation 20:12-15

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INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with "The Basics of Christianity" series. During this series we have learned that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament. He came to show us the ways of God and bring us salvation by paying the price of our sins by dying on the cross. He also performed miracles among us to prove that what He had taught was approved by God, the Father. His ultimate miracle was when He rose from the grave on the third day after His death.

This morning we are going to look at what the scriptures say about Heaven. In order to get a good understanding of Heaven, we need to learn the difference between Hades, Paradise, Heaven, and Hell?

This will be a **"Piece of Cake"** just explain scripturally the differences between Hades, Paradise, Heaven and Hell in 30 minutes...easy, huh?

No, not easy...nor is it possible to give a complete examination...but what I can do is prime the pump...and I believe that is what good message is supposed to do. It answers some questions, but through the Holy Spirit they awake a desire in you to search for more....to dig into scripture....to ask questions and seek answers.

So, I hope this morning that is exactly what happens...look with me at our text:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 20:12-15 (NASB95)

¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Prayer

Folks, "This is Judgment day!" All of us will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of ourselves.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NASB95)

²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

Our text tells us...one day everyone....great and small will stand before the throne. And here is the part that many people do not understand about their Christian lives. We know that salvation only comes through faith by the grace of Christ and we are not saved by our works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB95)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

We are saved through faith...not works. But I want you to read the very next sentence in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

As James tells us..."**Faith without works is dead**". We must have an active faith. The work we do for Christ should not feel like an obligation. It should be pleasing to us as we remember what He has done for us on the cross. Everything that we do and say is supposed to be for the glory of God and we are encouraged to listen for God's will in our lives and follow His leading. We were "**created in Christ Jesus for good works.**"

The dead will be judged according to what they have done and have failed to do.

Death in this life is not the end! There is an eternity for every single person, after this life. When Christ returns again each and every person will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. What we **do** in this life determines our destiny for eternity.

BODY:

I. What is Heaven?

At the time of ancient Israel they did not have as complete an understanding of the universe as we do today. So they wrote in terms with which they were familiar. The Jews spoke of three heavens.

The first heaven is what is called the firmament or sky that covers the earth. This is the realm of birds and clouds that surrounds the entire earth.

The second heaven is where the stars, the sun, and the moon reside. This is the space beyond the earth and it covers the entire universe.

The third heaven is unseen and is the residence of God, including Jesus Christ. This is where the dead martyrs and saints are today. This is the location of the throne of God.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross between two thieves, one of the thieves railed at Him and made fun of Him. The other thief admitted they deserved to be punished, but said Jesus had done nothing wrong.

Luke 23:39-43 (NASB95)

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” ⁴¹ And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” ⁴³ And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

It appears from this scripture that paradise must be where Jesus is, because the thief was going to be there with him. It also must be a place that those who have faith in the Lord will enter immediately upon death.

Paradise is a place of bliss and happiness. But it would seem to be an intermediate place, as opposed to the final establishment of a new heavens and a new earth that will replace our current earth and solar system.

Hades is the New Testament word for Hell.

Sheol is the Old Testament **Hebrew** word for Hell.

Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus. They each died. The poor man, Lazarus, must have been a righteous man. The Bible said he went to Paradise, a temporary Heaven or “Abraham’s Bosom”, as it is sometimes called. The rich man went to Hades, or Hell.

Luke notes that, although they were in spirit form, there was a great gulf fixed between the two of them, and there was no way to cross over. He writes:

Luke 16:22-31 (NASB95)

²² Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and **saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.* ²⁴ And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, **so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able**, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.’ ²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹ But Abraham **said*, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ ³¹ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

It appears that we will know our destination as soon as we die and the unsaved will be in misery. The rich man was waiting for the final judgment. And it appears that he already

knew that he will be cast into the lake of fire with the devil and his angels. So it appears that there is an intermediate heaven and an intermediate hell.

II. What Will Heaven be Like?

The apostle John saw heaven through an open door so that he might see and record in the book of Revelation some of the things he saw in heaven.

John records in chapter 21 how he was carried away to heaven. This is perhaps the best description of heaven in the Bible. It is written in words. The words are inadequate to fully describe heaven, but John tries to describe it as best he can.

Revelation 21:10-27 (NASB95)

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. ¹² It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names *were* written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ¹³ *There were* three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *were* the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to* human measurements, which are *also* angelic measurements. ¹⁸ The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²² I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, **but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

The beauty must have been overwhelming! Did you notice **WHO** would be able to be in heaven in the presence of God? **Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!** We will examine how to get our names written there later.

- For those of us who are still working hard and sweating in the sun for a paycheck;
- For those of us who have to provide food and drink for our families;
- For those of us who have to deal with family problems, unruly children, or ailing parents;
- the next description of heaven gives us hope!

Revelation 7:16-17 (NASB95)

¹⁶ They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

- For all of us who are seeing many of our loved ones in our generation passing away;
- For those of us who are noticing that we are getting older;
- For those of us who find it harder to physically get out of bed in the morning;
- For those of us who are struggling to get all the things done during the day;
- the next description of heaven gets even more exciting everyday!

Revelation 21:3-4 (NASB95)

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

Can you IMAGINE! **No hunger, thirst, pain, sorrow, or death! AND**, we will be in the presence of **GOD!!!** In a place prepared for His **Faithful**. A place that is so beautiful that words cannot describe it!

III. How Can I Have the Assurance of Heaven?

One day we will all appear before the judgment throne of Christ. He and He alone will determine the eternal destination of every person.

US news and world report took a survey and 87% of the individuals they interviewed believed they'd be going to heaven...they didn't think they'd fail a judgment...the judgment is for evil people...and they didn't believe they were all that bad...

The problem is they are using...

ILLUSTRATION:

A WRONG SET OF SCALES.

These folks are like the little boy who was doing poorly in school. One day he confidently approached his teacher's desk and said, “I don't want to scare you, but my daddy says if I don't get better grades...somebody is going to get a spanking.”

That little boy believed the teacher should get the spanking...not him. Unfortunately he was wrong!

The scale that most people use in this world to determine how bad they've been is “other people”. We compare ourselves with others and figure “Hey, I'm better than that person...I must be good.”

When you face Christ on Judgment Day, you are not going to be able to compare your life with others to make an account for your life.

The only hope you have is “Is my name recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life?”

The entire Old Testament prepares us for a Savior and the New Testament is about the life, death, resurrection and promised return of the Savior.

It is why Christ boldly proclaims...

John 14:1-6 (NASB95)

14 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

We have all sinned. There is no amount of good that we can do to erase that sin. The scriptures tell us that we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and obey His commandments for salvation. We are saved by the grace of God. We do not deserve to be made blameless before God, but Christ died on the cross, so that we could be found blameless before Him on Judgment Day. Our sins are covered by His blood and wiped away.

- No one will go to Hell because they’ve lied, because we have all lied.
- No one will go to Hell because they’ve cheated, because we have all cheated.
- If we’ve not physically murdered someone, we have killed people in our hearts with hate.
- Although we may not have committed adultery, we have all lusted in our hearts.

There is a Savior who died for all these sins!

The LOST will be eternally separated from God NOT just because they sinned, but because they rejected their Savior Who died to wipe away those sins from their life!

CONCLUSION:

LISTEN!

Romans 6:3-7 (NASB95)

³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

How do you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior? How do you cross over from spiritual death to spiritual life? You surrender yourself to Christ!

Through your obedience to Christ's commands and your new walk with Him, your name will be found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The Family of God