

“Heaven and Hell, Part 1”  
(Revelation 21:1-8)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we saw when Christ returns, several events would take place:
  - a. The destruction of Christ’s enemies at His return (Rev. 20:9).
  - b. The resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous (John 5:28-29).
  - c. The rapture of the church (1 Thes. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:26, 50-54).
  - d. The final judgment (Matt 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).
  - e. The destruction of the old heavens and earth will take place and the bringing in of the new (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:1-4).
  - f. Finally, the end of Christ’s mediatorial reign (1 Cor. 15:24-28).
  
2. When He returns, there will be a definitive end to all things as we now know them.
  - a. The curse will be removed from the Creation.
  - b. All things will be made new again.
  - c. The righteous will enter into this new world.
  - d. But the wicked will be cast into hell/lake of fire.
  - e. Human history will not continue for another 1000 years following.

B. Preview.

1. The Lord told us these things for a reason.
  - a. He wants us to know what’s coming.
    - (i) Heaven as an encouragement.
    - (ii) Hell as a warning.
  
  - b. He wants us to know how to prepare:
    - (i) By turning from our sins and trusting in Christ.
    - (ii) By living the life He calls us to live.
  
  - c. He wants us to be ready.
    - (i) The end is not all that’s important.
    - (ii) We must take the right path to reach our desired destination.
  
2. So this morning, let’s close this series on the History of Redemption by:
  - a. Looking at the encouragement of heaven, and considering the warning of hell.
  - b. That we can think seriously about where we are now and what we need to change to arrive.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let’s consider heaven.

1. What is heaven?
  - a. First, it’s the place where God dwells.
    - (i) Not the only place: God is everywhere.
    - (ii) But the place of His special presence of blessing.

- (iii) That's really all that needs to be said for the believer.
  - b. It's where we will finally be freed from sin (its power).
    - (i) "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel" (Heb. 12:22-24).
    - (ii) The only thing better than seeing the Father and Christ, is to see them through perfect eyes.
  - c. It's the place prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).
    - (i) First, for the soul at death.
    - (ii) But then the New Heavens and the New Earth for both perfected soul and body.
  - d. Heaven is the saints' reward.
2. Another important question is, what's it like?
- a. Though described in material terms (precious metals, jewels), this is likely symbolic.
    - (i) Material wealth will not be important.
    - (ii) However, it does indicate preciousness.
  - b. It's a place of spiritual blessing.
    - (i) The righteous see God:
      - (a) We can hardly imagine what this is like.
      - (b) We've had a taste – through the Spirit – but there we will drink it in.
      - (c) Everything good, beautiful, praiseworthy, enjoyable in this world, is in Him in infinite degree.
      - (d) When we see Him, it will all be worth it.
    - (ii) The righteous see Christ.
      - (a) Our Lord, Savior, the One who gave His life for us; whom we cherish.
      - (b) There is no greater joy than being with the One you love.
  - c. And it's a place of reward.
    - (i) There are degrees of reward.
      - (a) Places of honor: "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father'" (Matt. 20:20-23).
      - (b) Greater or lesser rewards: "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on

it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

- (c) The parable of the minas and talents teach us there will be a reward.
- (d) The Lord is just: He "will render to each person according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6).
- (e) There is not only the getting to heaven, but the reward to consider.

(ii) What is the reward besides places of honor?

- (a) Not material goods, not palaces, mansions, etc.
- (b) But the capacity to enjoy these things.

(iii) That blessedness will increase.

- (a) The more we learn about God, the more blessed we will be.
- (b) Since God is infinite, our blessedness will increase through eternity.

3. Finally, who will be there?

- a. Not everyone.
- b. Not even everyone who faithfully followed their beliefs.
- c. Only those who trusted in Christ and turned from their sins.
- d. Only those who persisted in taking heaven by force (Matt. 11:12).
- e. Is this what you are doing?

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