



“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” I Corinthians 15:57.

Destiny of the Soul

Lesson Aim: To set forth the Bible principle that there is an eternal, conscious existence beyond the grave.

L313. Date: November 1974. **Text:** John 5:25-30; Revelation 21:1-8.
Topic: Heaven; Hell; Judgment: Of Men.

“We believe that the end of this world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness”—J. Newton Brown.

Upon the appearing of Jesus in the air, believers will be resurrected and translated so as to be caught up into His presence. After a period of seven years, they will come to earth with Jesus to live and reign with Him for a thousand years. After that interim, He will raise the unsaved dead who will stand before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment. The unsaved will be consigned to the Lake of Fire; the saved will inhabit the blessed new heaven and earth which God shall provide.

It is important to observe that the righteous and the wicked are raised from death in two separate resurrections. They are judged at two separate judgments. The two resurrections (with attendant judgments) are separated by at least a thousand years. Men are making decisions as to where they will be at the time of Jesus' return and when He judges men.

The Bible makes it quite clear that each person will spend eternity somewhere. He will be in the bliss of heaven or in the terrors of hell. Today's study aims “to set forth the Bible principle that there is an eternal, conscious existence beyond the grave” so that you may be prepared to live

and to die.

I. IMMORTALITY OF MAN

Man is indestructible. The body may die and return to dust, but man continues to exist. The soul, the spiritual part of man, continues to survive after bodily death. Death does not end it all. The soul survives.

The Bible teaches that man is immortal. He never ceases. We, therefore, speak of “a future life,” “the future state,” and “the hereafter.” Even most pagan religions advocate the survival of the spirit of man, though usually it is in some dismal and half-life condition. The Word of God passes beyond that. It reveals that the whole person—body and soul together—survive the experience of death.

Survival of the whole person—body and spirit—implies a deliverance from death. The Bible teaches such a deliverance in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We agree with the Apostle Paul, “. . . **that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,**” Acts 24:15.

We believe in the immortality of man in view of his relationship with God. (1) God alone has true immortality (I Timothy 6:16). He is totally unaffected by death or the passing of time. He is absolutely immortal. (2) Man is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Man received immortality from God. Until sin entered human experience, man enjoyed continued existence (body and soul) without threat of death. With sin came death, but that was not the end. Physical life became limited, but immortality remained.

Jesus Christ brought immortality to light through the gospel (II Timothy 1:10). He revealed what is involved in man's immortal nature. Each person will spend eternity somewhere. Those who are saved by faith in Jesus will spend eternity with Him. Those who are unsaved because of rejection of Jesus will spend eternity away from Him. The gospel reveals the glory or the anguish which attends the fact of immortality. Today's study calls upon you to make your “peace calling and election” sure, II Peter 1:10.

II. IMMORTALITY OF THE SAVED

Saved people are going to spend eternity in heaven! The term, “heaven,” is used with three applications in the Bible. (1) It means the atmosphere where the birds fly (Genesis 1:20). (2) It means the outer reaches of space where the sun, moon, stars, and other heavenly bodies are (Genesis

1:14-15). (3) It means the place of God's personal presence, revealed in unimagined glory (Psalm 11:4). The third heaven is the home of the saved; it is their eternal inheritance. Where is heaven? I do not know. It is wherever God is personally revealed in all His divine majesty.

What is heaven like? Heaven is a definite place. When Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you . . ." (John 14:2), He used a word which means "a definite place." It is as definite as a kingdom which has a king (Matthew 18:1). It is as definite as a city with citizens (Hebrews 11:10). It is as definite as a home filled with happiness (John 14:2). It is as definite as a country with laws and customs (Hebrews 11:16). Heaven is a definite and real place.

Heaven is a place of complete deliverance from all presence, influence, or remembrance of sin. We are delivered from sin's penalty in salvation, from sin's power in sanctification, and from sin's presence in heaven (Revelation 22:15). Since sin shall be absent, all natural evil will be gone. There shall be "no more curse" so sorrow, sickness, death, and separation will be unknown (Revelation 22:3). Because those "former things are passed away," God will once and forever wipe away all tears (Revelation 21:4).

Heaven is a place of fullest life. It will be where believers will enjoy endless growth and development in the knowledge of the Lord God. It will be where believers will serve Him to their greater delight without ceasing except to worship and praise. Eternal life, endless development, and adoration of God will provide the fullest possible life.

Heaven is described in Revelation 21-22 in three lovely scenes. (1) Heaven is like a lovely temple where God's people worship Him. His name is written on each forehead as the High Priest of ancient times wore the holy mitre on his brow. Heaven is a place of worship.

(2) Heaven is like a spacious city. Its beauty is that of a translucent sunlit palace of crystal. It is surrounded by a jasper wall six thousand miles long, and two hundred fifty feet high, with gates of solid pearl, and a street of pure gold. It has a space of three thousand million cubic miles. All the cities of the world today make up only three hundred cubic miles. It has the capacity to hold a population seventy times the entire population of our globe.

(3) Heaven is like a lovely garden. From the throne of God flows a river of the water of life, on either side of the river grows the tree of life bearing fruit without ceasing, and its leaves effect healing of the nations. Of those things necessary to well-being and happiness—fellowship, food, water, health—all are provided there.

Who will inhabit heaven? God will be there as ". . . our Father which art in heaven," Matthew 6:9. Jesus will be there. He is already there, being

received upon His ascension and remaining “to appear in the presence of God for us,” Hebrews 9:24; Acts 3:21. The angels of God will be there (Matthew 20:30; Luke 15:7, 10). Believers will be there, for they will be with Jesus wherever He is (John 17:24; I Thessalonians 4:17).

There will be no wicked person in heaven. Sin can never enter there. **“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life,”** Revelation 21:27. The writer of a hymn expressed eternal truth by saying, “So if at the judgment bar sinful spots your soul shall mar, you can never enter there!”

The thing that makes heaven so wonderful is that Jesus our Savior, God our Father, the Holy Spirit our Companion and Sanctifier will be there. Their presence alone shall make heaven worth it all!

Heaven will come when the creation is changed. “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” Mark 13:31. Being on fire, they will dissolve with great noise and melt with fervent heat. In their place will come “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” II Peter 3:7-13. Saints of God will enjoy the immediate presence of God and know heaven on the new earth as God comes down to join them there (Revelation 21:1-3). Do not miss it! A new creation (earth) for God's new creation (saints). That will be heaven!

“Sometimes I grow homesick for heaven and the beauty I there shall behold. What a joy that will be when my Saviour I see on the streets of the city of gold!”

III. IMMORTALITY OF THE UNSAVED

Unsaved people are going to spend eternity in hell. Not everyone is going to be saved. Some will die impenitent. Because their sin has not been forgiven, they cannot enter heaven. Their destiny is hell.

“Hell” is the term used to designate the final state and destiny of the ungodly. In the New Testament, it is used to translate **“gehenna”** which came from the Hebrew **“ge-hinnom.”** The valley of Hinnom (II Kings 23:10) was the garbage dump of the ancient city of Jerusalem. A fire was kept burning there to consume the refuse of the city. The final indignity which could be made toward an executed criminal was to fling his body in Gehenna without proper burial (Matthew 5:22). It was such a picture chosen by Jesus and New Testament writers to picture the final destiny of the ungodly (Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43).

Is hell real? Yes, indeed! There are more references to hell than to

heaven in the New Testament. Examine Matthew 5:22, 29; 10:28; 18:9; Mark 9:43, 45; Luke 15:2; and Revelation 20:10-15. The Bible declares that hell is as real as sin is real. The very nature of sin is such that it would dethrone God, if it could. God must punish unbelieving sinners or abdicate His throne. That is why hell is real.

What is hell like? (1) Hell is a place. It is as much a definite place as is heaven. It has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41) just as heaven has been prepared for believers (John 14:1-3).

(2) Hell is a place of punishment. Those consigned there are said to go into “everlasting punishment,” Matthew 25:46. They shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,” II Thessalonians 1:9. Romans 2:8-9 equates the punishment with wrath (God's opposition to sin), indignation (wrath breaking forth in judgment), tribulation (severe affliction), and anguish (torturing confinement in a strait place without relief). How tragic that even one person should miss heaven for a place of punishment.

(3) Hell is endless. It is a place of “everlasting punishment,” Matthew 25:46. The lake of fire will be marked by “everlasting burnings,” Revelation 20:10; Isaiah 33:14. Luke 16:26 makes it clear that no one will ever leave hell to transfer to heaven because of a “great gulf” between them. The same word used to describe the life of the redeemed (“eternal”) is used to describe the punishment of the unredeemed. Compare John 3:14-15 with Matthew 25:46.

(4) Hell is the very opposite of heaven. Heaven will have no night; hell will know only darkness (Revelation 21:23; Matthew 25:30). Heaven will enjoy peace and joy; hell will endure agony and pain, Heaven will be blessed by the presence of God; hell will be cursed by His eternal absence. Heaven is to be sought; hell is to be shunned. Heaven is associated with hope; hell is associated with hopelessness. Heaven is for the followers of Christ; hell is for the followers of Satan.

Who will be in hell? The devil and his angels will be in hell, for God will cast them there (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). All fallen angels will be there; they have been “reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day,” II Peter 2:4; Jude 6. With them will be all the men and women who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (Psalm 9:17). Any person whose name is not written in the book of life will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 20:15; 19:20).

What a terrible fate! Make sure you do not go to hell. Make sure no one you know or love goes there. There will be degrees of punishment in hell,

but even the lightest sentence of hell is terrible beyond words. (Examine Matthew 11:20, 24 and Luke 12:47-48.)

Be a faithful Christian witness. **“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins,”** James 5:20.

Death is coming. At some now-uncertain day, you will die as do other people. Death is not the end. You are a partaker of the immortality of God. You shall not be destroyed at death. Death will come, but you will step through it and face God in eternity beyond.

After death comes the judgment. After judgment comes eternal destiny. You will spend eternity in a conscious, personal state. You will be fully aware of your circumstances and your companions. You will spend eternity in heaven or in hell. Your eternal destiny is not determined at the judgment, but by your decision to trust or reject Jesus today.

Which will it be for you? Choose the eternal bliss of heaven or the eternal bane of hell. Make certain your decision today. The choice is yours.

Questions

1. What is immortality?
2. Why do we believe in the immortality of man?
3. What is the difference in the immortality of the saved and the unsaved?
4. What is heaven like?
5. What is hell like?
6. Who will inhabit heaven?
7. Who will inhabit hell?
8. Why is there a heaven? A hell?
9. What determines whether one goes to heaven or hell?
10. What can you do to make sure your loved ones go to heaven?