



**“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 Final States**

**Truth:** Hell is the destiny of every lost person; heaven will be the eternal abode of all the saved.

*Cobb’s “Confession of Faith”: Article XX*

Text: Revelation 21:1-8, 23, 27

“We believe that the earth will be redeemed from the curse of sin and fitted as the eternal dwelling place of the people of God. The fitting of the earth for the eternal home of the redeemed will be by a process of purification by fire, or melting. The finally impenitent and incorrigible wicked will be cast, both souls and resurrected bodies, into Gehenna, or the lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be punished forever” (Cobb's Baptist Church Manual, page 86).

Two men were traveling together when they passed a signboard which read, “Will a God of love punish one of His creatures forever?” One man responded, “I say no.” His companion replied, “It matters little what you or I say. The important thing is what does God say.”

What does the Bible teach about the eternal destiny of the saved and unsaved? The question is of utmost importance since each one of us will go to one destiny or the other.

We believe that there will be a distinction between the destiny of the saved and unsaved. The saved will enjoy the bliss of heaven. The unsaved will endure the torments of hell. That is the teaching of the Bible. If we approach the Word with a mind free from preconceived opinions, we can know what God says.

## I. HEAVEN, HOME OF THE SAVED

**A. Where is heaven?** The Bible speaks of three heavens. The first is the atmosphere where the birds fly and the clouds move (Genesis 1:20). The second is the outer space where the planets are located (Psalm 19:1-4). The third is the place where God dwells (Psalm 48:2). The location of the third heaven is not clearly given. Yet the Bible speaks of one being “*caught up to the third heaven*” (II Corinthians 12:2) and of God looking “*down . . . from heaven*” upon men (Deuteronomy 26:15).

The heaven to which the saints are going will be on this earth. The earth is now suffering as with birth-pangs the curse which came on it as a consequence of human sin (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:1.9-23). But a day will come when “*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*” (II Peter 3: 10, 13). That refers to the “*new heaven*” and “*new earth*” which John saw in Revelation 21. The new Jerusalem will come down from God out of heaven to dwell on the new earth. Then the announcement will be made, “*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them*” (Revelation 21:3). That is the heaven to which we are going.

**B. Who inhabits heaven?** God will be in heaven, of course. Heaven is His throne forever (Isaiah 66:1). He looks down from heaven upon us (Deuteronomy 26:15). He is the one we have in heaven for whom our hearts yearn (Psalm 73:25). His presence will make heaven our joy and our home. The angels of God will be in heaven. There are many of them around His throne (Revelation 5:11). They worship before Him (Revelation 7:11) and rejoice with Him at the salvation of each sinner (Luke 15:7, 10).

The saints of God will be in heaven. Jesus went to prepare such a place for us (John 14:2). He petitioned His Father, “*I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory*” (John 17:24). There will be “*a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*” who will stand before the throne of God and sing praises to God in that blessed day (Revelation 7:9). They are the saints of God who have “*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*” (Revelation 7:14).

**C. What is heaven like?** Heaven is a definite place, not just a condition or state of being. Jesus said, “*I go to prepare a PLACE for you*” (John 14:2). He prepares a place for us which He called “*my Father's house*” (John 14:2).

Heaven is a place where the Christian belongs. His citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). His hope is laid up for him in heaven (Colossians 1:5). He has an inheritance *“incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven”* (I Peter 1:4). His heavenly Master is in heaven (Colossians 4:1). Heaven is his eternal home (II Corinthians 5:1). No wonder he gets homesick for heaven.

Heaven is a place where there is complete freedom from sin and its curse. Natural things which cause death and tears will not be there (Isaiah 25:8). There will be no more curse of sin (Revelation 22:3) so *“there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”* (Revelation 21:4). The reason the new creation will be free from sin is that the devil has been cast into eternal hell, with all his angels, so there will be no more influence of evil. Praise God!

Heaven is a place of perfect union with God. *“They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God”* (Revelation 21:3). God predestined that our salvation would make us *“to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (Romans 8:29). The promise that we shall be like Him will have been realized as we *“bear the image of the heavenly”* (I Corinthians 15:49; I John 3:2). God himself will be personally present with us there. *“The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it . . . and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads”* (Revelation 22:3, 4). He will make it “home” for us.

Heaven will afford the opportunity of fellowship with the redeemed. We will have fellowship with our kindred in the flesh (II Samuel 12:18-23). And we will have fellowship with our kindred in the Lord (Matthew 8:11). What fellowship we will enjoy with one another in God's presence!

Heaven is described in three ways in Revelation 21, 22. (1) It is like a great tabernacle of worship (21:1-8). The whole of the heavenly city is a temple. The table of showbread will be the tree of life which bears fruit. The lampstand will be the tree of knowledge in the garden. The ark of the covenant will be the immediate presence of God with His people. What an opportunity to worship God!

(2) It is like a great city to dwell in (21:9-27). It is spacious, ten times the land area of France or forty times the area of Britain. It could contain seventy times the total population of our globe. And that is just one city! It has a jasper wall 6,000 miles long and 250 feet high. The whole city is sunlit crystal. What a place to live with God!

(3) It is like a beautiful garden (22:1-5). There is water, food, fellowship, and constructive labor. All that is necessary to human happiness is there. What a place to serve God!

You can make sure you are going to heaven by repentance from sin and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Make it sure now.

## II. HELL, DESTINY OF THE DOOMED

**A. Why is there a hell?** Some people object to the idea of an eternal hell for sins committed in so brief a lifetime here. Is it fair? Yes, when one considers the true nature of sin. A low view of sin will make hell seem unreasonable. A view of the “*exceeding sinfulness*” of sin will make hell seem a most proper end for sin and sinners.

Consider the dignity of Him against whom man sins. Sin is not just against man. Sin is high rebellion against the sovereign God of heaven. That makes it much more serious. Two men enlisted in the army may have a fight and be reprimanded. But let an enlisted man strike an officer and he is court-martialed. Rank enters into the matter. What, then, if a mortal man sins against the God of the universe? He deserves hell!

**B. How is hell described in the Bible?** The description of hell is most disturbing. People generally ignore the doctrine because it makes them uncomfortable. But intellectual honesty demands that one see how God has described hell.

Hell is a place of “*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41). The one who goes there is intruding into what God prepared for the punishment of rebels in the spiritual realm. It is “*everlasting punishment*” which is endured there (Matthew 25:46).

“*Fire*” is the most common designation used to set forth the sufferings of hell. It is a “*lake of fire*” (Revelation 20: 14, 15). It is “*everlasting fire*” (Matthew 18:8). The “*smoke of their torment*” ascends forever and ever from that dread place (Jude 13). People are “*tormented in this flame*” (Luke 16:24).

Shame and separation are a part of the sufferings of hell. Those who have not prepared to meet God by repentance and faith in Jesus will experience a resurrection to “*shame and everlasting contempt*” (Daniel 12:2). That is the place of the “*blackness of darkness*” (Jude 13), indicating the sense of separation and aloneness which besets the spirit there.

It is a place where the sense of God's wrath against sin is present and never ceases to oppress. “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God*”

*abideth on him*” (John 3:36).

**C. Is hell really eternal?** That question is answered best by an examination of the words “*eternal*,” “*everlasting*,” and “*for ever*” in the Bible.

They are used in a good sense to refer to the “*everlasting God*” (Romans 16:26), indicating His eternity. They are used to refer to “*everlasting life*” (John 3:16) and “*eternal life*” (John 3:15), indicating that the life received in Jesus lasts as long as God lives. So the Bible speaks of our “*eternal redemption*” and “*eternal salvation*” (Hebrews 5:9; 9:12).

Those same words are used to describe the torments of hell. It is an “*everlasting fire*” (Matthew 18:8), “*everlasting punishment*” (Matthew 25:46), “*everlasting destruction*” (II Thessalonians 1:9), where sinners are “*tormented day and night for ever and ever*” (Revelation 20:10).

If “*everlasting*” describes the nature of God as existing without end, and if “*everlasting*” describes the life received in Jesus as a life without end, then “*everlasting*” must describe the punishment of the wicked as being without end. Yes, hell is eternal. Think about it and weep over sinners!

**D. Is there a way to escape hell?** Yes, there is. God does not delight in condemning sinners to hell. He would prefer that they trust Jesus and be saved (Ezekiel 33:11; I Peter 3:9). That is why He “*sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*” (John 3:17). The way to escape hell and go to heaven is to turn from sin to Jesus Christ and trust Him to save you.

There is no reason for any person to miss heaven and go to hell. The gospel has come to you for the purpose of your salvation. “*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

1. Where is heaven?
2. Who inhabits heaven?
3. What is heaven like?
4. How is heaven described in Revelation 21, 22?
5. Why is there a hell?
6. How is hell described in the Bible?
7. What evidence is there that hell is eternal?
8. How can one escape hell?
9. With whom can you share this good news?
10. How do you know you are going to heaven?

