

RETHINKING ETERNITY, WEEK ONE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

Introduction: Our goal in these next 4 weeks is to stimulate your thinking and encourage you to search your own Bibles to come to your own conclusions. I'm going to introduce some thoughts that might be new to you, or might be different than what you have grown up believing. We need to search these things out with great humility, and realize that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not our ways.

Why are we studying this topic? In Psalm 90, in the only Psalm attributed to Moses, we read this beginning in verse 4.

A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.

5
Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—
they are like the new grass of the morning:

6
In the morning it springs up new,
but by evening it is dry and withered.

7
We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.

8
You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.

9
All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.

10
Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

11
If only we knew the power of your anger!
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.

12
Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

We need to number our days... Two weeks, there was a big reunion / celebration service back in the building where I was baptized, over 43 years ago... Someone had dug up a photo of my freshman student ID... I was walking around, seeing old friends,

and one guy I knew pretty well came up,—and I’ve seen this guy in the last few years—and his first words were, “Wow, you look old.” After I thanked him for exercising his obvious gift of encouragement, I went on and saw a bunch of other folks. But I started thinking... I decided I’d use some of that ‘aging software’, you know, you put your picture in, and ask it to tell you what you will look like in 25 years, and this is what I got.... **The point is that we need to live our lives with eternity in mind.**

4 Week Outline

- What Happens When We Die?
- What is Heaven Like?
- Do The Unsaved Suffer Forever?
- What, in Hell, Do You Want? (commas are important)

What Most Religious People Have Been Taught... Life/ Death – Heaven or Hell

BTW, this is a hot topic, with lots of different views.

- Rob Bell – Love Wins. He takes the position that there is no hell at all.
- Francis Chan – popular evangelical author, wrote a much more Biblical book that engages the many, many scriptures that talk about hell.
- We need to dig into the book that matters, and that is the Bible... Let’s kick off our study by digging into some definitions

Definitions

1. **Sheol** – 67 times, equivalent to the NT word, “Hades”. In OT teaching, Sheol is the place of the dead, both the good and the evil. We’ll look at an example in a sec
2. **Gehenna** – properly translated “Hell.” We’ll cover this in week four. Gehenna is the final place of the wicked.
3. **Paradise** – This is a word Jesus uses in his brief conversation with the penitent thief on the cross... Lk 23:43 - Not heaven, but an intermediate state, where the souls of the righteous departed await final judgment.
4. **Tartarus** - 2 Peter 2:4-9 – wicked angels held in Tartarus (NIV, Hell), punished before the Day of Judgment. Many have surmised that the ungodly dead are punished prior to the Day of Judgment in this place call Tartaroo, or Tartarus.

Insights Into Sheol / Hades

- The word Sheol is used 67 times in the Old Testament; sometimes it is the righteous who go - the Patriarchs, the Prophets, Samuel.
- When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, 200-300 years before Christ came, the document was called the Septuagint, and Sheol was translated with the word Hades. In **Luke 16:23, in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we read this**, “In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side...”
- So we already know that there are righteous in Hades... now we see that the wicked also live in this place called Hades...
- So...

- Hades is NOT Hell
- Righteous People are in Hades
- Unrighteous People are in Hades

Hold that thought as we get insight into Paradise

Luke 23:43 – In Luke 23, Jesus promises the thief, “TODAY, you will be with me in **paradise**.” The penitent thief was promised that on THAT day, the Friday of the crucifixion, he would be with Jesus in paradise. But we know that this could not have been heaven, because even Jesus had not ascended into heaven, and would not until after his resurrection.

See **John 20:17** – On Sunday, after Jesus was physically resurrection, he said to Mary Magdalene, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”...

So on **Sunday**, he had **NOT** ascended to heaven, but on **Friday**, he was to be with the penitent thief. Jesus did not go to heaven on that weekend. **So, where exactly did they have this reunion? It was in Paradise, which is a section of Hades. Paradise is heaven-like, but it is not heaven.**

So, does that mean that the righteous and the wicked hang out together in Hades?
SLIDE

Read Luke 16:19-26 – “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 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.’

25 “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. 26 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.’

Does this part of Hades have a name? It does, and you can find it in 2 Peter 2. SLIDE

2 Peter 2:4-9 – For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, [a] putting them in chains of darkness[b] to be held for judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; 6 if he condemned the cities of Sodom

and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

In verse two, the word translated 'hell' is the greek 'Tartarus.' It is used to describe the prison for fallen angels, and many think that it is also the temporary home of the unrighteous lost. Biblically, Hades might be pictured in this way... SLIDE

SUMMATION. SLIDE

- LIFE, REBIRTH, & DEATH
- INTERMEDIATE PHASE
 - PARADISE, FOR THE SAVED
 - TARTARUS, FOR THE LOST
- THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST
 - RAPTURE OF THE SAVED – 1 THESS 4:13-18

- THE DAY OF JUDGMENT
 - Final Destiny
 - Heaven or Hell

All of this information is available on our website, both the keynote slides & the sermon notes. I encourage you to wrestle with these scriptures and consider them.

Next week, we're going to a happy place, as we consider the question, "What is heaven like?"

Please... invite your friends - ushers will be handing out invitations as you leave today.