

Men's Breakfast Message – Heaven and Hell – Unseen Realities

Dave Fraser – June 11, 2022

In Matthew 7, vs 13-14 (also Luke 13:23-24) we have a picture of two gates – a wide gate and a narrow gate, and quite naturally these gates lead to two roads. Both roads point to life after death, that is, to a conscious existence in a new, resurrected body, in an actual real place. The fact these are presently what I would call “Unseen Realities” makes them no less real.

The wide, or the broad road, with many travelers, leads to hell. The narrow road which by comparison has relatively few travelers, leads to heaven. We'll have more to say about both roads in a few minutes.

First, by way of introduction, I'd like to briefly mention what we simply call sin. Sin. In our society today, people have lost the fear of God. Sin is an unknown word. Just about every sin imaginable is now accepted in our society, with the exception of perhaps pedophilia and the murder of children, but, no surprise there is now an organization that promotes pedophilia, stating it is just another sexual orientation. I don't need to name the group. They are very vocal; you know who they are.

Because there are no IMMEDIATE consequences for sin, it is difficult to convince anyone that there are penalties for sin. But Romans ch. 1 makes it very clear that with every sin a person is storing up for themselves the wrath of God. Listen carefully: nobody gets away with anything. Every sin, every lie, every adulterous thought (yes, God judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart, Hebrews 4:12), every evil act big or small, will be judged by God. NOTHING escapes God's attention. Nothing. One day, every sin will be judged by God and a person will pay for their sins in a place called hell. Hell is conscious, never-ending torment in a resurrected body. We'll say more about that in a few minutes. I will also tell you what the Bible says about avoiding hell, so don't leave now.

Jesus spoke more of hell than He did of heaven, and I will follow that pattern this morning. So this is a horrible, horrible part of my message, because hell is a horrible, horrible destination. But we will end our time together with great news! There are some very common misconceptions about hell that I want to deal with

right away. **The first is universalism**, which teaches that God is love and in the end everyone will be saved – everyone will end up in heaven. Quite simply, that is false. It is a lie. Not everyone will be saved. The fact is, according to the Bible, more people will be lost forever in hell than will be saved. Remember, the road to hell is a broad road with many travelers on it.

The second **misconception about hell is annihilation**. This false teaching states that after a period of suffering in hell for your sins, you are simply annihilated. “Poof,” – Gone. Out of existence. That also is false. It is false. We were created in the image of God, which means among many other things that our soul will live for all eternity. The third misconception – **I don’t know what you call this, but** those that heard the Gospel but rejected the Gospel will go to hell and those that never heard the Gospel will end up in heaven because they are not responsible for the fact they never heard the Good News. Romans chapter 1 silences that argument because God has planted eternity in man’s heart but man still rejects God. There is none that seek after God, Rom. 3:11.

There are many other misconceptions about hell, but there is one more I need to mention. This error is serious and deeply troubling because it sounds a bit like a second chance. It is not. I’m speaking of purgatory. This church’s encyclopedia states: “**Purgatory** is a place of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God’s grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, (less serious sins) or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions.” To summarize, Purgatory is a place that a Christian’s soul goes after death to be cleansed of the sins that had not been fully satisfied during life. If you take that definition, and put it under the microscope of God’s Word, it is fraught with error from beginning to end.

The doctrine of purgatory is serious error because it causes people to think, “Oh well, another sin, I guess I’ll have to spend a little more time in purgatory!” No you will not because there is no such place as purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory will

damn a person to hell forever. Purgatory is a slap in the face to the Grace of God whose Son paid in full the penalty for all sin. That erroneous doctrine is based, in part, on a false exegesis of 1 Cor. 3:15, which speaks to believers works being tested in the fire, not the believer himself.

So all of these are false teaching; they are totally foreign to the Bible and the Grace of God. When I was asked, and agreed, to speak on heaven and hell I do not have the option of picking and choosing how to understand any passage of scripture – there is only one correct historical interpretation. My job, and yours, is to bring any opinions we may have, any errors we may have entertained, anything contrary to the Bible, into alignment with the Word of God.

So, having set aside some of the false teaching on hell, what is hell like? We will answer three questions this morning, and it's going to have to be the quick answers, the Readers Digest abridged version, or we'll be here for lunch and possibly dinner as well.

1. How long will hell last?
2. Who goes to hell, and conversely, who does not
3. What is hell like?

Remember at the moment, we are talking about those who passed through the wide gate and they are on the broad road leading to hell. It is Frank Sinatra's road – remember his song, "I did it my way!" It's basic, it's fundamental, if you are going to come to God you have to come the way God prescribes.

God holds us responsible for not only what we do, but also for what we say and what we think. Personally when I think about the things I have done, the things I have said, and things I have thought, it is very scary indeed – scary doesn't even come close.... It was more than enough to send me to hell.

Here is what the Bible says: the unforgiven dead will be resurrected, given a new body suitable for eternity, declared **guilty** at the Great White Throne judgment,

Rev. 20, and thrown into hell, the Lake of Fire. They will hear, in their new bodies, with perfect hearing, the awful awful words by God – **“Depart from me. I never knew you.”**

Here is the answer to our first question – how long will they be in hell? Short answer: FOREVER. For all eternity. Speaking of heaven, we sing Amazing Grace – “When we’ve been there 10,000 years, we’ve no less time there... the same is true for those in hell. They have no less time there! The Greek word for eternity, and it is used for both heaven and hell means, NEVER ENDING. Just a couple of quick points – hell is punitive, not remedial. Hell is a punishment for past sins, not an attempt by God to correct or restore the sinner. Second, there is no indication anywhere in scripture that those in hell ever repented of their sins. In fact, in the closing book of the Bible, speaking of people during the tribulation, still in this life, it says “they repented not, they repented not.” (Rev. 9:21 & 16:9)

The Word of God states in clear, unambiguous terms “the soul that sins, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:20) This is what the Bible calls the second death. The first death is when your body dies; the second death is when your soul is separated from God forever, and it is into a never-ending torment called hell that every unrepentant sinner goes. The police officers here this morning will understand when I say “There is no exit strategy.” The people that go to hell are there forever. They cannot get out. It is totally without hope. Hell is the forever home of those that shun God’s gracious offer of salvation. You don’t even have to shun it or reject it – just ignore it. Romans 7 – the whole chapter, and Romans 3:20, 6:14, 6:23, 8:1, 11:6, Hebrews 4:12 & 4:16, Titus 2:11 ... and many more, all look at the terrible reality of sin and hell.

The anger of God against sin is nothing new. Way back in the Pentateuch, in the days of Moses, Deut. 32:22 says “For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell,” ... In the N.T., Matt 10:28 “... do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body

in hell.” The word destroy does not mean annihilation – in the Greek it means continuing, ongoing, never-ending devastation.

What is hell like? Hell is described in these terms... eternal fire & everlasting punishment Matt. 25, shame and everlasting contempt Dan. 12, a place where the fire is not quenched, where their worm does not die Mark 9 - (ref. to Gehenna, an old dump outside Jerusalem), a place of torment Luke 16, everlasting destruction or devastation 2 Thess. 1, a place of torment, a place where the smoke of their torment rises forever Rev. 14, and a lake of burning Sulphur Rev. 20. Hell is eternal fire, outer darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth and torment, unquenchable fire.

Let us note right here the condemned are not given a second chance. They had multiple opportunities when they were on earth. A person’s eternal destiny is forever sealed at the point of death. That is why we do not pray for the dead, but we do pray for their families. There are many more descriptions of hell. It is also described as a place of hopelessness, of gloominess, of darkness, of deep, deep despair. Some of the most profound thinkers have concluded that the very essence of hell is hopelessness. Not only never ending torment, but hopeless – no chance of ever getting out. Not ever!

I searched for Sheol, Gehenna, Tartarus, and Hades, all names in scripture for hell and just pulled out these key words as descriptors of hell ...

Agony, banishment, brimstone, curse, darkness, deprivation, destruction, distress, fire, teeth-grinding, guilt, hopelessness, loneliness, pain, suffering, pressure, prison, punishment, ruin, separation, shame, contempt, smoke, Sulphur, torment, trouble, trash-heap, weeping ... there are more – but that gives us more than we need to know it is a place to be avoided at all costs. It is all forever. Forever – Never ending!

Illustration: Detroit salt mines.

Detroit not listed in the Top Ten touristy places in the US
Did you know? Salt mines SW of the city, I toured them years ago
Four of us in a tiny wire cage, lowered 1,160 feet underground
Huge cavernous rooms, vaulted ceilings, bare light bulbs, over 1500 acres
Salt used on roads, many old rusted out vehicles
Guide turned out lights – could FEEL the darkness (details)
Panic begins to set in, the “what if’s”
What if they forget us down here? What if he can’t find the light switch,
What if we get stuck in that wire cage...?
Like hell, no hope of ever getting out.

Jude, speaking of false teachers said “**...to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.**” Hell is deep, deep darkness; the Bible calls it “outer darkness,” just like those salt mines! Only worse! Rev. 14:19 says this: “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.” That’s from Rev. 14:9, – speaking of those who follow the antichrist, but it is the same destination for all who reject the saving power of the Gospel.

What people find difficult to comprehend is this: How can one “little” sin, for example, result in an eternity of punishment? It seems excessive, doesn’t it? Even someone who has a short life, what we would call a good person, say they die at 30 years of age, a sinner as we all are, but gets an eternity in hell. There is a sense here in which the gravity of the sin does not matter. All sin – any sin – the results is hell.

Let me ask a question! What kind of a God does that? What kind of God banishes people to eternal torment forever? We are after all just human, we do have faults, we do have failures, we do have sins – but what kind of God does that to a person?

We can understand incarceration; we can understand some kind of punishment for wrongdoing. But for eternity, never never, never, never ending punishment?

There is an answer, and it is way beyond my ability to explain, but I'll try: a God Who is Pure. A God Who is Holy! A God Who cannot bear sin - a God whose righteous character demands justice. A God Who is just and fair. A God who punishes wickedness and rewards righteousness. This is very important: It's not that we don't understand about hell – it being forever. We do understand that, and it is forever. Forever! Scripture is very clear.

The problem is we do not understand the Holiness of God. We do not comprehend the Purity, the "Other Worldliness" of God. We cannot grasp God is Pure, Holy, Righteous, Infinite, Unchangeable, Omnipotent, Wise, True, and yes, Just. Some folks have manufactured their own god, a kindly old grandfather type of god who will accept anyone who comes to him. Not so! It's not true! It is the OT that reveals the pure, holy, righteous character of God, and by-and-large we overlook the Old Testament. Isaiah said, "Woe is me for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah said "woe is me" and he was a believer – he was a saved man. (The word "woe" carries with it a special biblical significance we can't go into this morning). Hell is not remedial or corrective punishment – this is retribution. This is justice in action. The wages of sin is death. This is God paying out your wages for the sins you have committed! He warned you, and you ignored the warning – the soul than sins, it shall surely die!

Pick a crime – any crime – perhaps one of the terrible school shootings. The person gets charged, goes to court, and clearly is found guilty. The judge says "Now look, son, I know you didn't have a very good upbringing and lots of difficult situations you faced. I understand your issues and you've had a really rough time. Promise me you'll stop this and I will release you. You are free to go – just don't do that again!" What kind of a judge would do that? Only a corrupt judge! Any good judge

must apply the law to that situation – he must. There would be a riot in the courtroom, and elsewhere if he just flipped it off.

In Luke 16, we have the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. I'm sure you know the account, so for the sake of time, I will just remind us of the highlights ...

There is a rich man and a poor man – Lazarus, the poor man – is shown to be righteous, he was on the narrow road, while the rich man – because of the careless way he lived – is deemed to be wicked, being on the broad road. They both died – one went to heaven and one went to hades or hell. Father Abraham is pictured – the father of the Jewish nation, and the rich man in hell calls out to him asking for someone to just dip his finger in water and touch his tongue and comfort him because he is being tormented in the flames but father Abraham explains there is a great gulf, a great distance fixed between heaven and hell and no one can go from either place to the other. Then he calls out and says “No, no, no, wait father Abraham, I have five brothers send Lazarus to warn them, they will believe if someone returns from the dead.” And what does father Abraham say? An astounding statement “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if someone returns from the dead!”

What does all this mean? Moses? The Prophets? Returning from the dead? Repenting from sin? Let me paraphrase it. – They had Moses and the Prophets – so do we! The Bible – the Word of God. This is where the rubber meets the road – listen carefully: only the saving power of the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus is sufficient to take someone off the broad road and move them to the narrow road leading to life eternal in heaven.

Nothing more is required, nothing less will do, and no one else but Jesus will save. Only Jesus Christ can save. Acts 4:12 – “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Go with me back to the courtroom for a minute. This time it's YOU that have been charged. YOU are guilty of sins – crimes – against a Holy God. The evidence is presented. The judge is about to bring down his gavel and say GUILTY. Then someone steps forward – “Wait, those sins, those crimes have already been paid for.”

The pure, holy, sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, took the wrath of God for us. He died a substitutionary death on the cross (the wages of sin is death), He rose the third day (proving his sacrifice was sufficient – completely satisfied the wrath of God). Jesus Christ, God incarnate, God in a human body, took the punishment we all deserve and He says to us, “repent of your sin and trust Me, I will give you a righteousness based on faith alone, and I will save you!”

Your church cannot save you. Your pastor cannot save you, your priest cannot save you, your minister, your rabbi, your money, and your best efforts cannot save you. Trying harder will not help. You cannot save yourself. Every human being on planet earth is totally lost until they come to Jesus for salvation. He alone can save.

Now we understand the awfulness of sin. And now we see the Gospel is a treasure! Jesus is the treasure. Have Him, and you have life. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” 1 John 5:12.

Why is there a hell? The righteous character of God demands it.

Well, we've seen two roads; we've seen a bit about the road to hell and how truly awful it is, what about the narrow road to heaven? After seeing the broad road and the destructiveness of sin, the narrow road must be a cakewalk, right? Wrong! The narrow road to heaven is not free of danger. On the narrow road we will encounter false preachers and teachers; we will encounter sin and wrongdoing, we will encounter deception and temptation, perhaps even persecution. The false teachers promise wealth and health – but cannot deliver. Deception and temptation are ever present on the narrow road. Jude identifies who the false

teachers are in very graphic language. And, wow – Some of the false teachers are even right inside the church! God has not promised believers a paved road with no speed bumps. But He has promised us two things: His Spirit to guide us along this narrow road, and a home with Him forever that we call heaven. Physical death is not the end.

You've heard people say "this world is not my home; I'm just a-passing through." That is true. Did you know heaven will not be our forever home either! At the very end of human history, after the 1000 year millennium, after the unrepentant dead are judged and cast into hell, God will destroy this present earth, (2 Peter 3) and make "all things new." For the Christian, "heaven" (the present home of God) is not his or her forever home! Let me just read to you what the Word of God says... This is John speaking; he was given a view of future events and the world to come...

Revelation 21:1-6 ... ¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Heaven is not like Hallmark Cards would have you believe. You won't be sitting on a cloud, playing a harp, eating Philadelphia cream cheese. (TV Commercial)

The imagery in Revelation 21-22 seems to point to Garden of Eden-like conditions. So it may very well be that in our forever home, on a recreated planet “wherein dwelleth righteousness,” that we will continue the work of Adam and Eve before the Fall. We will be in new resurrection bodies, enjoying unhindered fellowship with God. We will continue to work, learn, grow, develop, and accomplish things. We will have access to the New Jerusalem, a city 1500 miles square.

Many years ago I was talking to someone about the glorious future for the believer, and we were talking about the rapture, about heaven, about our incredible future, and another person came to me afterward and spoke to me, and said, “Dave, I heard what you were talking about,” and said in a rather incredulous voice, “Do you really believe all that stuff?” I said “I do, I wholeheartedly believe it.” She turned and walked away with her big broad smile and looking back said “Wow, I always wondered about you, Dave! Now I know your elevator does not go all the way to the top.” This lady retired, and moved to a cottage on Belize with her boyfriend. They both perished in a tropical storm, a hurricane, on that Island. So far as I know, she never became a believer, so this very moment she is in Hades, awaiting the final judgment.

1 Cor. 2:14 says “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” Sin, you see, blinds us to the truth!

As we close, heaven and hell are real. They are not for Good people or Bad people! Hell is for all those who never repented of their sins and never sought the mercy of God. Heaven is for those who have repented, who have turned away from their sins, and accepted God’s mercy. God’s grace knows no bounds. God will accept all who come to him in humility, repent of their sins, and accept His Grace. Let’s close with the beautiful words of Jude in the penultimate book of the Bible.

Now, “to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—²⁵ to the only God our

Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord,
before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

End.