

ESCHATOLOGY

A Study In Last Things

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ESCHATOLOGY

ESCHATOLOGY #1

Introduction

There are many mysteries about the unseen world of the Spirit. As we proceed in these studies we will run into many mysteries. We accept these mysteries by faith. However we will also learn many things that will help us to look forward to heaven and its glory.

We may not understand how God made us from the dust of the ground. But we know that all things are possible with Him. The body is not in the image of God although we have been made in his likeness. Some have supposed our physical image is like the spiritual image of God. Jesus said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). Jesus said that "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Spirit would not have the appearance of flesh.

Paul speaks of being caught up into heaven and heard words which are inexpressible. (See 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.) We will never know in this life the fullness of the glory that is prepared for us until the end of all things here on earth. One thing for sure God has worked out all things for our glory.

God uses our earthly words to paint a picture of what is beyond this world. Thus we have to use caution not to be too dogmatic. (See Ecclesiastes 5:2.) Also, God often speaks in metaphors. A metaphor is a figure of speech where it's ordinary use is applied to another. It is a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another.

For example God told Moses "You cannot see my face; for no man shall see Me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). Too often we miss the metaphor in Moses' statement. A Spirit does not have a face. The word face is used as a metaphor by God to emphasize His presence. God said, in verse 22 "So it shall be, while My glory passes by." Then in 23 he says, "You shall see My back; but My face should not be seen.

Moses then was privileged to see only a glimmer (back) of the presence of God and not his total presence. He did not see a physical being as one would see a man, for God is spirit. Man has always had a tendency to make God after his physical image. We must be careful not to bring God down to our level of understanding. God is far greater than our physical bodies which he created.

A study of the soul, the spirit and the spiritual world is a challenging study. We are venturing into the realm of the unseen, the untouched or un-encountered. Not only is our vocabulary insufficient for such a study, our perceptions of what is real concerning the soul and spirit must be by faith in what the word of God reveals.

However, what is essential for us to know has been revealed to us in God's word. At the same time we must be careful not to go beyond what is revealed or formulate theories that we cannot substantiate from the Bible.

The Scriptures say that man is "Fearfully and wonderfully made." Man was God's crowning act of creation (Genesis 1:26). Since the beginning men have wondered about their origin and at the same time have stood in awe and fear of physical death, pondering all its mysteries. There has always been a universal desire to know what happens after death. Unfortunately men who have gone to the Scriptures have not always given the right answers.

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It is important we begin this series with an understanding of what death is. Physical death is represented in several ways in the Bible.

1. A man on a pale horse. **“Revelation 6:8 “And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him.”**
2. Man’s last enemy. **1 Corinthians 15:26 “The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.”** Death is an enemy because it robs a young person of living a full life. When it is sudden with warning it leaves those behind in shock and loss. Most of the time sickness and pain are associated with death. There is always the grief and loneliness of those left behind.
3. The king of terrors. **Job 18:14 “His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.”**
4. Water spilt upon the ground. **2 Samuel 14:14 “For we must needs die, and are water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise a means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”**
5. The folding of a shepherd’s tent. **Isaiah 38:12 “Mine age is departed, and it removes from me as a shepherd’s tent.”**
6. A thread cut by a weaver. **Isaiah 38:12 “I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.”**

These descriptions give a rather dark picture. Man has always stood in awe and fear of death. Just the thought of going into an unknown realm, leaving behind our loved ones and friends contribute to fear. The fear of meeting God and judgment no doubt creates fear with many. No one has come back from the dead to tell us what death is like. Thus it remains a mystery. Then the many false concepts cause to wonder what death will be like adding to the confusion and fear of death.

1. Some say man is nothing more than an animal.
2. Some teach the wicked into an unconsciousness, soul sleep or annihilation
3. Many believe there is no such place as hell. A poll indicated over 50% denies hell.
4. Others believe one sleeps until the resurrection. People often visit a grave site of a loved one speaking as if the real person is in the grave.
5. Still others believe the soul go directly to heaven or hell.
6. Some believe in a form of reincarnation. They left their body but returned to reenter it.

To understand what happens in death it is important to understand the origin of man. An incorrect understanding of his origin will lead to an incorrect understanding of his destiny.

Man is a dual being He is composed of two parts – physical and spiritual. The physical came from the dust. The spiritual, the soul or spirit has come from God. **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).**

This was all a creative act of God. The word **“formed”** is a word that applies to the art of the potter. Man did not evolve through millions of years. He was in the beginning formed by the power of God. Evolution has no place in Christian thinking. Neither do Christians fear this theory. It cannot be proven and is not scientific as some would lead us to believe.

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Death is inevitable. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Death is the result of disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Adam and Even were told "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"

But physical death did not occur that day. Adam lived to be 930 years old. However, he died a spiritual death. He became separated from God. The father of the prodigal said "For this my son was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15:24).

Something else took place on that day. Both they and the tree of life were removed from the garden thus man could not perpetuate his life and in time he died a physical death. In physical death the body and the spirit separate. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

This is the Bible's definition of physical death. It also answers the question concerning abortion. When a human sperm and ovum connect the marvel of conception takes place and a fetus comes into existence. At the very moment of conception God puts a spirit or soul into that fetus. Without the spirit a fetus would never survive for one second.

When the physical body returns to dust it will never exist again in the same form it was in while alive on earth. It will however inherit a new body. Paul says, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). The word "sleep" is often used to describe the physical body after death. Stephen "fell asleep" while being stoned.

However sleep does not apply to the soul for it is conscious after death. Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ when he was transfigured. They were not asleep but very much alive and conscious. Sleep has only to do with the physical body and never the soul. Peter describes Christ's death as "being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit." (1 Peter 3:18).

ESCHATOLOGY #2

Five Distinct Words That Tell Us About Hades

1. **First** is the Hebrew word "Sheol" often translated as "grave" or "hell." The word "grave" is more accurate since "Sheol" really refers to the place of the unseen dead. The old Septuagint version (Old Testament translated into Greek about 300 B.C.) translates Sheol as "Hades," the place of unseen departed spirits.
2. **Second**, the Greek New Testament word "Hades" occurs 11 times. It is equivalent to the Old Testament word "Sheol" the place of departed conscious spirits. It is the state of spirits between death and the resurrection. The literal meaning is "unseen" or "hidden." A place undiscernible to the human eye.

Peter on Pentecost spoke about the death and resurrection of Jesus. He refers to a statement made by David in the 16th Psalm. "He foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ, that neither was he left unto hades, nor did his flesh see corruption." (Acts 2:31).

It is clear that Christ was in Hades after his death but returned to be in his body. Later in verse 34 Peter makes it clear this remark made by David did not refer to David himself. "For David did not ascend into the heavens."

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If David was not in heaven then he was in the hadean realm. We see the rich man and Lazarus in Hades. "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:23).

3. A third word is the word "Tartarus." It refers to that part or section of Hades where the wicked are confined awaiting their trial and punishment on Judgment Day. There they will be sentenced to Gehenna. This Greek word is found twelve times in the New Testament. It refers to the final abode of the damned. It is translated as "hell." It is not a part of the hadean realm.

Peter says, "God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (Tartarus) and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). The word "hell" in this passage is actually the Greek word "Tartarus" and not hell as rendered in the KJV and other versions. This is the only passage where the word "Tartarus" is found in the Greek New Testament. To the Greeks it meant a place of confinement for the wicked dead where they await the Day of Judgment.

4. A fourth word is "Paradise" used by Jesus in Luke 23:43 when he told the thief on the cross, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." Originally this word meant a beautiful Persian garden, or enclosed park, or pleasure ground. Later it came to denote a beautiful place of great blessings. Jesus must have been in this compartment of the hadean realm since he did not ascend to His Father until after his resurrection.

We recall what Jesus told Mary "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; But go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'" (John 20:17). He was in the part of Hades called "Paradise."

5. A fifth word is the word "gulf" found in Luke 16:26. It separated the two sections or divisions of the hadean realm so that it was impossible to cross from one side to the other. This suggests that no relief could be sent from the side of Paradise to the side of Tartarus. The primary lesson is the fact that there is no second chance. One's fate is sealed at death and there is no second chance after death.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The soul returns to God but does not go directly to heaven or hell but to the realm of Hades.
2. Those in Hades are conscious. (They can see, hear, feel, converse and recognize.)
3. There is memory.
4. An impassable gulf existed between Paradise and Tartarus making it impossible to change one's state.
5. The righteous will be comforted and evil will suffer punishment.
6. At death we enter Hades without a body. John saw souls in Hades indicating they were without bodies which is the state of man between death and the resurrection (Revelation 20:4). In the resurrection we will receive an incorruptible spiritual body far superior to our present physical body. (See 2 Corinthians 5:1-4.)
7. From what we have seen about death and our destiny, no faithful Christian has anything to fear about death and their future state or condition.

ESCHATOLOGY #3
Further Considerations of Luke 16

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Luke 16:19-31. "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those who want to come from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

When studying **Luke 16** we must keep in mind that this text is loaded with metaphors. The bodies of the rich man and Lazarus were buried on earth. They were not in Hades. Yet in the language Jesus used he speaks of the rich man seeing Lazarus wanted him the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. Such body parts as eyes, fingers, tongue, bosom and even water are things to be found only on earth.

The body returns to the dust and the soul returns to God. **So how could there be any "torment" when there was no flesh to suffer pain?** This experience is beyond anything we have to make an exact parallel with.

In some way the rich man was in an emotionally (**spiritual**) agonizing situation. Lazarus was in an emotionally pleasant situation. There is enough said to make us realize we will do anything to avoid going to the place called Tartarus. Thus, when we look at **Luke 16** we need to think metaphorically and not literally.

Remember the Holy Spirit had to choose human language to convey heavenly spiritual truths we need to have. Thus we must use caution in taking literal definitions of this world in explaining those things that are beyond this world. This makes it challenging to understand exactly what is going on beyond this physical world.

Peter makes two interesting statements which metaphorically may have a bearing on **Luke 16**. In **1 Peter 3:19** it is said...."by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison." Then in **1 Peter 4:6** he wrote.... "for this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead." These two statements have always raised questions as to their exact meaning.

A common explanation of these somewhat difficult verses is that Christ did this preaching in His spirit (**before he possessed a body**) through Noah. These people that Noah preached to are now imprisoned in Tartarus a part of the hadean realm.

However we know that Jesus also went into the hadean realm. We also know he did this in the spirit and not in the body. God has from the very beginning communicated his will to mankind. Noah had preached to the unrighteous of his generation but it went unheeded.

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In Abraham's time God set forth a promise to Abraham that, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." Abraham nor his descendants understood how this would be fulfilled. Later the prophets spoke of this promise and even they did not understand what they were prophesying about. All these died not having experienced the promises.

It would seem that those in the hadean world are not aware of what is taking place on earth. While the rich man might remember his brothers he would not know what they were doing now that he was in Tartarus. **Would it not be reasonable to think that when Jesus died he would go to those in Paradise and announce that God's plan to redeem mankind had now been accomplished?**

He would announce to them that the redemption which God had planned before the foundation of the world had finally been accomplished by the outpouring of the sacrificial blood on the cross. The righteous would rejoice that their faith had paid off. **Would he have gone only to the righteous?**

It is not unreasonable to think that he preached this to all who were in the hadean realm. It seems this would increase the torment of the unrighteous because they would realize what they had missed because they refused to trust in God. It would seem that the statements of Peter refer to the time Jesus visited the hadean realm after his death.

The word "Paradise" means garden. This word has its metaphorical foundation in the Garden of Eden in **Genesis 2:9** where we read of the "tree of life" in the Garden of Eden. This association is brought out in **Revelation 2:7**. "To Him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise (garden) of God." Metaphorically the tree of life had been transplanted in Paradise. On the other hand there is nothing to indicate those in Tartarus had access to this tree.

Revelation 2:7 says it is the Paradise "of God." Thus, it originated from God. It is a realm from God that is prepared for the spirits of the righteous who have returned to God their Father. It is a realm hidden from the living, but one in which the righteous are "with Christ."

It is no surprise that when Paul contemplated his passing on from this life or remaining in the world he said, "For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ is far better (Philippians 1:23). In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul said, "We are confident, I say, and well-pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." **Can we say the same things today?**

We must not overlook the fact that Lazarus was "carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom." This indicates to us the special care given by God to those who die in the faith. Many Christians just before death have spoken of seeing angels. While we have a tendency of discounting such stories as merely delusions yet this is what many have said as they were dying. This is an existence where the disembodied spirits of the righteous are in the protection of the Lord until they are clothed with a spiritual body from God at the final coming of Jesus.

Thus we must keep in mind that this dwelling in Paradise is not the final goal of the righteous. Paul said we "groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from God" (2 Corinthians 5:2). We are so to speak, "naked" or without a body in Paradise. Thus those in Paradise look forward to having an incorruptible body in the new heaven and new earth (heaven).

We often wonder if those who have gone on to be with the Lord experience time as we do on earth. We must remember that time for the living is measured by the planetary movements of the earth and moon in their relation to the sun determine our days and years.

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The dead live in another existence outside of the universe thus they would not experience time as we think of it. They will not grow old as we do in our physical bodies. With the final destruction of the world time will no longer exist.

However, there seems to be some experience of time in a different sense. For example in **Revelation 6** the souls under the altar cry out, "How long, O Lord holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth" The Lord responds by saying that they are to "rest a little longer." They seem to be conscious of time as long as this earth is in existence. When this earth is terminated then time will cease to exist and "death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire" (**Revelation 20:14**).

When the righteous die, they go to the unseen world of the dead in order to be "with the Lord." Stop and think for a moment about being with the Lord. Being in Paradise is not a lonesome existence but being in the actual presence of the Lord Jesus.

When the wicked die, their spirits also return to God and their bodies return to the dust of the earth. The righteous are reserved in comforts with the Lord while the wicked are reserved in torments. Both await the second and final coming of Jesus which we study in our next lesson.

ESCHATOLOGY #4

The Second and Last Coming of the Lord

It seems that the second coming of the Lord, the resurrection of all the dead, and the end of the universe will all occur instantaneously at the same moment. But there seems to be a certain order to these events.

First, there will be the sudden appearance of the Lord. Paul says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**).

Second, the dead in Christ will arise. Paul writes, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**).

Third, those who are alive at His coming will be caught up with the dead to be with Christ. Paul continues in **verse 17**, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord." Thus not all people will enter the realm of Hades. These are the ones who are living when the Lord returns.

Fourth, we will meet the Lord in the air not on earth and we will remain with Him throughout eternity. In the clouds does not mean we will meet him on earth

It seems some of the members in Thessalonica were concerned about their dead. They feared they would not be aware when the Lord returns. They were afraid they might not be included with those who were alive when He returned. Paul writes to assure them that no one will miss out on the return of Jesus. In fact he says the dead will be the first to arise.

Those alive will follow and join with them in the resurrection. He assures them in **1 Thess. 4:13** "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you not sorrow as others who have no hope".

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They need not sorrow because those asleep are among the redeemed. Some have used these two passages to prove what they call the rapture. The idea of the rapture is that all the righteous will mysteriously and suddenly without any warning be literally snatched up into the clouds above, being rescued from a terrible tribulation that will transpire on the earth for a period of seven years.

After this seven year period the Lord will then descend again (a third time) bringing with Him all those snatched up in the rapture. He is supposed to set up a kingdom and rule from the literal throne of David for a literal thousand years.

No such doctrine can be found in God's word. The word rapture does not appear anywhere in scripture. This borders on the sensational which no doubt accounts for the popularity of this false doctrine. When we look closely at what Paul writes to the Thessalonians we will see that after being caught up to meet the Lord. Paul says, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

There is no indication the Lord will ever again set foot on this earth. The Lord will return for a second time but this will be the last time. He is already ruling over His kingdom at the right hand of God. In **Mark 9:1** Jesus makes it clear the kingdom would be established in the time of his listeners.

Two angels told the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will do come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:10 – 11.)

The appearing will be in the heavens where the faithful Christians, both dead and alive, will go to meet Him. They will go with Him to heaven and thus live with him for eternity. Neither of the two angels said anything about a third coming of the Lord. The scriptures only speak of a second return and this is not the Lord's return to the earth but rather in the air.

The lesson taught by these verses is; be ready when He does come again. We must not allow ourselves to be diverted from the plan God has for us by becoming entangled in the affairs of this world as those in the days of Noah did. While we do not know when Christ will return, yet we know Jesus will come. Furthermore we know he could come at any time. Peter refers to this coming as, "The day of the Lord."

We do not know when that day will be. Jesus said in **Matthew 24: 43, 44** "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." He says his coming will be like a "Thief in the night." It can happen at any moment. Our responsibility is to always be prepared.

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:43, 44).

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you, for you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in their night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety' then sudden destruction comes on them, as labor pains on pregnant women. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4).

He will be revealed with "His mighty angels" bringing with Him the departed saints according to **2 Thessalonians 1:7**.

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They will be coming to receive their new resurrected bodies. "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life" (2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

ESCHATOLOGY #5 The Resurrection

God has clearly demonstrated through the ages that He plans to raise people from the grave. Elijah raised a widow's son (1 Kings 17:17-24). Elisha resurrected the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:8-38). It is clear that Abraham believed in a resurrection. When called upon to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice it is said that he believed "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19). It is said that Abraham looked forward to a "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

David in Psalm 23 said, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." God reminded Moses on Mount Sinai, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6) The use of the present tense in this statement emphasized that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive at the time God spoke to Moses on Sinai.

They were still alive in the spirit and are still alive today in the spirit. They are in Paradise awaiting the resurrection of their changed bodies that they will live in for eternity. There are not many references in the Old Testament to a resurrection but God gave enough hints that they knew that this earth was not their final home. An eternal and better place awaited them.

When we come to the New Testament the writers are more specific about our future home. Jesus Himself was the greatest example of a resurrection from the dead. For example He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11).

However, this resurrection was different than the one that was yet to come. The same body of Lazarus that was buried is the one that was raised. It remained unchanged. He would have to eat and drink and die all over again. Jesus spoke of another resurrection.

It would be different than all the resurrections that had occurred in history up until that time. The resurrection He spoke of was one where one would be raised never to die again. There were actually two resurrections of Jesus. The first was after He was placed in the tomb and arose on the third day but with the same body when He died on the cross.

The second resurrection was when He ascended into heaven with a changed body that was suitable for living eternally in the spiritual realm of heaven. Paul declares, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). He was the first to do this.

A resurrection assumes something comes forth from something that has already existed. There would be no resurrection if the body that goes into the grave and returns to dust does not in some way come forth as something new. If nothing will ever come forth from the grave then any embodiment of the future would be a creation and not a resurrection.

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Paul wrote, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). Again he says, "And God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power" (Romans 6:14).

There will be a resurrection but not like the resurrection of Lazarus or for that matter like any resurrection other than the resurrection of Jesus. The difference is that we will be "Changed."

In 1 Corinthians 15:51 Paul declares, "Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Here Paul is revealing what had been a mystery in the past. This means that the body that goes into the grave will come forth but "changed" into a spiritual body.

However, not all of that mystery has been revealed. One mystery is that God will use our mortal body as the seed from which the immortal will come. How can this be? The Corinthians wondered about this too. "But someone will say 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?'" (1 Corinthians 15:35).

Paul answers this question by saying "what you sow is not made alive unless it dies." Thus a body must be sown. That which comes from the body that is sown is directly related in some way to the mortal body that is sown. Thus Paul pictures the dead physical body as seed. Seed is dead but when it is placed in the ground it germinates and brings forth a new plant. Paul says, "But God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to each seed its own body." The natural physical body will germinate that body which will be given from God.

Paul uses the word "transform" in Philippians 3:21. He says that Jesus will, "transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." Thus it will be entirely different than our body that we live in now. Is this difficult to understand? It certainly is! However this is what Scripture says and we walk by faith and not by sight. There were no human words or illustrations the Holy Spirit could have used to fully explain the nature of the immortal body to mortals.

This new body will be like the one that Jesus has. John had witnessed the resurrected body of Jesus. It could appear in the presence of the disciples and then disappear (John 20:19). He had a body to which Mary could cling (John 20:17). He had a body that could be touched (John 20:27). Thus it was not a spiritual body, but a body of flesh and bones.

Is the changed body in which the Lord now lives a physical body or a changed body that He had after His ascension? Jesus said that a spirit does not have "flesh and bones." Therefore after His resurrection He returned in His fleshly body.

But at His second resurrection (ascension) into heaven He took on a spiritual body. We are told that the Lord "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). After His ascension He took on a "glorious body." As to what this body will look like we cannot know since we cannot see into that glorious heavenly realm.

There were two prominent religious sects in Jesus day. They were the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection or in angels. In answer to a question put to him by the Sadducees about the resurrection Jesus said that after the resurrection those in heaven "neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels" (Luke 20:36).

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Matthew and Mark use a different word by saying they are "like the angels of God in heaven" (See [Matthew 22:30](#) and [Mark 12:25](#)). Thus we learn that we will be like the immortal angels who are sexless in an environment that will not need procreation to sustain the existence of an immortal host of heavenly beings.

In [1 Corinthians Chapter 15](#) Paul discusses at length the resurrection and the spiritual body we will have. In [verses 35 – 54](#) notice the contrast he makes between our physical and the spiritual body.

EARTHLY BODY	SPIRITUAL BODY
Sown in corruption	Raised in incorruption
Sown in dishonor	Raised in glory
Sown in weakness	Raised in power
Sown a natural body	Raised a spiritual body

The natural body is the source from which the spiritual body will emerge. Paul said, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" ([1 Corinthians 15:50-52](#)). The present body must be transformed. It will see corruption but the body that comes from it cannot decay but will exist throughout eternity.

Speaking of our resurrected bodies Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth---those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation ([John 5:28, 29](#)).

Daniel expresses the same thought. "And many of those who sleep in the dust (our physical body) of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" ([Daniel 12:2](#)). So it is apparent that at the resurrected the evil will have some kind of body which will enter into the punishment of hell. But our goal is to be embodied with a spiritual body prepared by God that is eternal, thus will never die.

There are those who deny the possibility of a resurrection of the dead. The Christian's hope rests on the fact that there is a resurrection. Jesus proved He was the Son of God by his resurrection. The empty tomb cries out the fact of a resurrection. This is one reason why we become Christians. We live in hope that death is not the end but only the beginning of eternal life.

ESCHATOLOGY #6 The End of the Universe

In preparation for this study we need to first read [2 Peter 3:5 – 12](#). "But they deliberately forge that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives. As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will

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bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

Peter reminds them of the time when the flood came. No one paid any attention to the preaching of Noah. The flood caught them by complete surprise. Not being prepared the people perished. This continues to be repeated today. Very few give serious attention to the coming of the Lord.

No doubt some think it is off in the far distance and there is no need to be concerned now. Jesus in **Matthew 24:42** warns to watch, "for you do not know what hour your lord is coming." When we see the evil that exists in this world today I often wonder why God allows it to go on. In the time of Jesus it is estimated that the population on earth was around 250 million. It was an evil world then.

Horrible things happened. Today the population is six and one half million. **Just think how much evil has been multiplied?** It would be about 23 times as much as in the first century. While we cannot vouch for these statistics we assume they are fairly accurate.

The answer why God allows the universe to continue may be found in what Peter wrote in the above **verse 9**. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Thus, it is the longsuffering of the Lord that allows this universe to continue to operate in such precise precision.

Men are not going to repent of their evil deeds unless they receive the message of salvation – the gospel. The end may depend to a great extent on how well we get the gospel to the lost world. If we become indifferent God may decide to end the universe. So it could be that we Christians play an important role in the end of the universe. In the time of Christ it is estimated that about 1.2% of the world was Christian. **How much more is it today?**

Peter tells us, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise." The noise which will last for a moment or so, will be ear piercing. This is even more understandable. It takes a tremendous amount of heat to detonate an atomic bomb. When this occurs there is a tremendous noise. It is interesting that some things that are being discovered in the scientific world today may indicate the type of ending we will have for the heavens and the earth in the end.

Peter tells us that both the heavens and the earth are being reserved "for fire." He further states that "The elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2:10).

2 Peter 3:12 "The heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat."

Hebrews 1:10 – 12 "And, Thou, Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

Shortly before the disintegration of the heavens and earth we are told that Christ shall appear.

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Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8 "You who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." From this it would seem no one will be left on earth when it is destroyed.

ESCHATOLOGY #7 The Judgment

With the coming of the end of time three simultaneous events will occur: the resurrection, the end of the universe, and the judgment. In the history of the world, God has brought judgment against men and nations at different times. Both the Old and New Testaments proclaim that there is a final accounting of one's behavior in this world.

This last judgment will terminate all of the judgments of God. With the second and last coming of Jesus at the end of time the Lord, "will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and His kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).

There will be present all those who are living when He comes. There will also be those who have been reserved in their disembodied existence in Paradise and Tartarus. They have already received their judgment. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

The ASV has, "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." The wording assumes that judgment takes place immediately after one physically dies. There would be no need for judgment to be postponed.

With the coming of Jesus they must now receive their final destinies. No one great or small will escape the judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). This is a most sobering thought. This should spark soberness in the minds of all thinking people.

We are told that when Paul "reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid" (Acts 24:25). Considering the situation Felix was in he should have been afraid. However, for the faithful Christian there is no fear, for the blood of Christ cleanses us.

John said that we can "have boldness in the Day of Judgment" (1 John 4:17). He also wrote, "When He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

NOTHING WILL BE HIDDEN FROM THE LORD

We are not aware of the many sins that are committed by men. They remain hidden in the heart. However, God knows. He knows every secret thing. A man might commit some serious crime and never be discovered and brought to justice, but God knows. Hebrews 4:13 says, "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Jesus said, "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known" (Luke. 12:2).

By Jimmy Eaton

ESCHATOLOGY JESUS WILL BE THE JUDGE

Paul wrote, "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Romans 2:16). Jesus said, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John. 5:22). Again Paul writes that God "has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained" (Acts 17:31). Since Jesus will be the judge, it is His "judgment seat" we will stand before. Paul declares, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Under Roman law the judgment seat was a place of authority upon which a judge sat to make pronouncements. What was spoken from the judgment seat was final. Jesus will assume the position of judge in the end. It will not be a long drawn out affair of one person at a time but instantaneously with the resurrection.

GOD'S LAW WILL BE THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

For judgment to take place laws must be in place otherwise there is nothing to judge men by. From the beginning of mankind God has given laws that He requires men to live by. Those who lived during the Christian dispensation will be judged by the law of Christ. Jesus said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Those who lived under Moses Law will be judged by that law. While the Jews were accountable to the Law of Moses the Gentiles were not under that law. [What law will they be judged by?](#) After the flood men knew about God. Paul says men could know there is a God by looking at nature, "thus they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

In [verse 23](#) he speaks of those who "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man." This suggests a deliberate act to change the truth about God. During ancient times there were obviously laws that men were acquainted with even to the offering of animal sacrifices. Cain and Able are examples of this. Thus, there were enough laws ([truths](#)) for them to be judged by. The judgment of God will be based upon truth and how man has reacted to truth.

JUDGMENT WILL BE FAIR

In [Romans 2:11](#) Paul says "there is no respect of persons with God." He is fair to all recognizing the circumstances that they find themselves in. The Gentiles did not have the revealed word of God, as did the Jews. Paul says, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves." This shows that they had some law and thus could sin.

The expression "without the law" refers to a revealed written law. But the Gentiles will be judged by what they had an opportunity to know. So while they did not have a revealed written law they had some law and were responsible for what they did know. The preaching of such men as Jonah, Balaam and Daniel and no doubt many others shows the Gentiles received some information. The Old Testament gives many examples of where God punished certain nations for their wickedness.

They knew better but sinned. Thus he punished them for their sin. Gentiles knew that certain things were wrong and certain things were right. Conscience approves or disapproves on moral issues. For example it has always been wrong to murder or to steal. Thus, the Gentiles will be judged according to the "law unto themselves."

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What about those who live in the Christian age but have never heard the gospel? Will they be held accountable for not being Christians? Could not the same principle that Paul applied to the Gentiles who lived during the time of the Law of Moses be applied to those today who have never heard the gospel?

We may not know all the answers to such questions, but we do know for sure that God is just and that he will judge fairly. We must leave condemnation in the hands of God in such cases who is no respecter of persons and will judge fairly.

It would seem our concern should be about whether we are getting the gospel to those who have never heard the name of Christ. One thing for certain is they are lost and without hope without the blood of Christ.

WE WILL ALSO BE JUDGED BY OUR DEEDS

Paul writing to the Ephesians said, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). In Revelation 22:12 Jesus said, "My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work." In Matthew 25 Jesus makes it very clear that those who will go away to certain punishment will be those who did not do such things as feed the hungry, visit the sick, those in prison, cloth the naked, etc.

He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me" In contrast there is Romans 3:20 which says, "By deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight." In Galatians 2:16 Paul says, "for by the works of the law no flesh will be justified. Does Paul contradict Jesus? Certainly not!

The point is that no one can keep any law perfectly. Also, there is no way we can ever do enough good deeds to earn our salvation. So why be judged by our deeds. The answer is found in James 2:18. "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works". Deeds are simply an expression of our faith in Jesus. It comes down to the fact that it takes the grace of God because we can never do enough to earn salvation.

Christians want to do good deeds out of appreciation for their being saved by the grace of God. God's grace motivates us to do good deeds, which show our appreciation for what He has done for us. Paul wrote, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Grace motivated Paul to do more for the Lord. The more we appreciate the grace of God in our lives the more we want to work more for the Lord. Christians labor in thanksgiving because of the salvation we have been given by Jesus Christ because we know that we can never do enough to earn our salvation. The result is clear. No Christian has to dread the Judgment Day.

ESCHATOLOGY #8

Hell

How long has it been since you heard a sermon or lesson on hell? For most of us it has been a long time. Why? Probably because people do not want to hear or talk about it. The Bible is very graphic in discussing it. What is described can cause one to cringe.

By Jimmy Eaton

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In one survey 58% believed in hell while 42% did not believe in it. To some hell is a word used in jokes. Others considered it a myth. With some it is a byword. Others consider it something out of the superstitious past.

God created us free moral agents, meaning He has made us so that we make our own decisions as to how we will live. Man is capable to making bad decisions or he can choose to make good decisions. Since he has this ability to choose, he needs to be aware that he is going to be held accountable to God for his decisions. There are serious consequences for bad choices and rewards for making good choices.

It would be wonderful if all men loved God to the extent that they would want to please him by obeying his laws. However, love for God is either missing or else is not sufficient enough to motivate people to do His will. Therefore, God warns of the consequence of living a life of sin. The unforgiven sinner will suffer separation from the presence of God for eternity.

“Those who willfully sin have only “a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26, 27). The word **“devour”** means to consume or destroy with devastating force. Hell serves as a deterrent to making poor choices. Men should fear God, **“who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).** Thus, an understanding of hell is necessary to deter us from disobeying God’s law.

GEHENNA

We get our English word **“hell”** from the Greek word **“gehenna.”** It is a transliterated Greek word **(Greek spelling for a Hebrew word)** which refers to the **“valley of Hinnon”** located just outside of Jerusalem. It was where garbage was dumped and burned leaving an awful stench. In early history it was the place Israel had offered their children as sacrifices to the god Moloch **(2 Kings 16:3; 21:6).**

It is believed many died in this valley during its history. It became known as a place of abhorrence. The Jews who heard Jesus speak well understood that Gehenna represented destruction where bodies were consumed.

DESCRIPTIONS OF HELL

The New Testament is filled with metaphors that describe hell. The Holy Spirit uses metaphors to explain hell because nothing has ever existed in the human experience for mankind to fully understand what hell will be like. In the use of metaphors we have to be careful that we understand them as metaphors which are not always literal. The Holy Spirit uses terms that are horrifying to us in order to make us understand that hell is the most terrible place one could exist in.

For example it is described as a place of **“fire and brimstone.”** The rich man of **Luke 16** who was **“tormented in this flame”** is a terrible sight of torture. Such an existence seems unbearable. Hell is also described as a place of **“outer darkness.”** If it is just the darkness of this world then it could not exist as there is fire and fire gives out light.

Since the world will be dissolved and will pass away then the darkness would be different than the darkness of our world and fire would be different than the fire of this world. Keep in mind the Holy Spirit is using metaphors that are very graphic in order to depict for us how horrible hell is.

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The Holy Spirit uses the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" several times in reference to the punishment of hell. This is another metaphor. It suggests the extreme mental anguish one suffers when they realize their great loss of heaven.

OCCUPANTS OF HELL

Jesus said in [Matthew 25:41](#), "Depart from Me, you cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Thus hell is a place that was originally prepared for Satan and his spiritual hosts of darkness. His demons knew that they were destined for hell during the ministry of Jesus. They pleaded with Jesus, "Have You come here to torment us before the time?" ([Matthew 8:29](#)). Hell is for those who know not God and who do not obey the gospel ([2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9](#)).

There are two groups mentioned in this verse. We can easily identify those who do not obey the gospel although they have had the opportunity to hear it. However, those who "do not know God" are often ignored because we are reluctant to say that someone who does not know about God would be held responsible for their ignorance. This sounds harsh to some.

This really goes back to our last lesson, which dealt with judgment in which we discussed those who live in complete ignorance of God and His Son, Jesus. It would be well to reread that lesson dealing with Paul's statement that the Gentiles were a "law unto themselves."

THE PUNISHMENT WILL MATCH THE CRIME (sin).

All through the Old Testament especially the Law of Moses we see that punishment varied according to the seriousness of the sin. Some sins received greater punishment while other sins that were not as serious received a lesser punishment. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is an example of where punishment was given to match the crime. ([See Exodus 21:23-27](#).)

Our whole justice system is based on the severity of the crime. We have first and second-degree murder and manslaughter. All receive different punishments. [When it comes to hell should a person who has lived a good life receive the same punishment as a Hitler? Both will endure hell but will their punishment be the same?](#) It is difficult to answer since we know so little about how God will deal with such cases.

Jesus in the parable of the wise steward in [Luke 12:42-48](#) Jesus spoke of the servant "who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (vs. 47). However, the servant "who did not know, yet committed things worthy of strips, shall be beaten with few" (vs. 47).

[Does Jesus teach degrees of punishment in this parable?](#) In [verse 48](#) he says, "to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." The more we know the more God expects out of us thus one could be punished more than those who know less.

It would seem there will be a difference in the intensity of the punishment but there is absolutely no consolation in receiving fewer stripes in a place reserved for the devil and his angels. Just to be in their presence would be a most horrible existence.

INTENSITY AND DURATION

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Most interpret Jesus' reference to the sufferings of hell as lasting for eternity. To use human language, God will turn up the flames on a Hitler but lower them on a good person who has never obeyed the gospel and this will go on for eternity. Under our system of justice the length of time a person spends in prison depends on the seriousness of the crime. For example punishment for perjury is different than robbing a bank with a gun. Remember that our judicial system is modeled to a great extent after God's system.

If we look again at **1 Thessalonians 1:9** we see that those who have no knowledge and those who do not obey the gospel will suffer "everlasting destruction." The word "destruction" means that something is terminated. **Could this mean extinction?** After just punishment has been administered, then extinction would take place. It would be everlasting in the sense that any eternal decree of God remains fixed and can never be changed.

Those destroyed would never come back into existence. Notice Jesus' words, "And do not fear those who kill body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (**Matthew 10:28**). The word "destroy" means to put to an end.

Is Jesus speaking of the extinction of the resurrected bodies and souls of the wicked, which cannot ever be changed because what God has decreed is eternal? Remember the meaning of the word "devour" which we observed above in **Hebrews 10:27**.

A variation on the length of punishment followed by extinction would not be out of harmony with a just and merciful God. Paul reminds us of **Exodus 33:19**: "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." Our God is not a fiendish God. God does not take pleasure in punishing those who are unworthy of heaven. He certainly does not delight in causing someone to suffer. God is a just God, and His justice is always fair.

Will a person for their forty or fifty years of ignorance receive the same punishment as the most defiled and evil persons? This and other questions about the Day of Judgment are difficult questions. Whatever the answer may be we know for certain we can trust our God to be fair and just. In every case He will do the right thing because He is the perfect judge.

Of those interviewed about hell only 12% said there was no possibility of their going there and 71% said they did not know. This would indicate people are not serious about the existence of a literal hell. Many people need to wake up to the reality of the coming of the Day of Judgment.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (**Revelation 20:12**). "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (**Revelation 20:15**).

ESCHATOLOGY #9 Heaven – Part One

The concept of heaven can be found in most all cultures and nations that have existed in history. It seems men have had enough sense to realize there has to be something better beyond this life. Most of their concepts have been false however. It is only when we turn to the Bible that we discover what the true and undistorted view of heaven is like.

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However, the words of the most gifted orator fail to describe what the real heaven is like. No metaphor, regardless of how powerful, can fully describe the beauty, riches, joy and the glory of heaven. Heaven is beyond our imagination or the ability of human words to describe. Paul said he knew of someone (probably Paul himself) who had been caught up into Paradise, "and heard inexpressible words, which it not lawful for a man to utter."

In 2 Corinthians 2:9 Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him." John adds, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John. 3:2).

The word "heaven" is mentioned 261 times in 20 of the New Testament books which shows its importance. Seemingly there are no human words which can fully describe what heaven is like. Thus it would appear that we can never fully appreciate heaven until we get there. However, God's word has furnished us with many word pictures to help us understand it is the most wonderful place anyone can go.

In Colossians 3:1, 2 Paul says, "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." With this in mind we want to look at the descriptions God has given to us of heaven.

REVELATION CHAPTER 21 GIVES US A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF HEAVEN

The book of Revelation gives us a bird's eye view of heaven. While it is highly figurative language it presents a place of unparalleled beauty. John saw a New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. This New Jerusalem is Heaven where we will dwell with the Lord for eternity. John is carried to a vantage point where he can get a panoramic view.

1. It sits on not one but 12 foundations each of a different precious stone. This expresses the idea of it being unshakeable and permanent plus great beauty. Most foundations today are not visible but the foundation of heaven is visible and is beautiful beyond our imagination.
2. Rising from the foundations is a solid wall of Jasper with twelve gates of pearl. Walls were essential to protect the people from invaders and thieves. The walls are not only strong but are composed of pure jasper. It has twelve gates indicating an abundant entrance.
3. The city lies foursquare but it is also a cube 1,500 miles wide, high and long. Roughly 33 and 1/3 billion square miles about one half the size of the U.S. This statement relates to what Jesus said to His disciples: "In my Father's house are many mansions." Thus the thought is that there is enough room to accommodate all of the redeemed.
4. The city appears as a bride adorned for her husband. There is no more beautiful sight on earth than a bride as she walks down an aisle to be joined to the man she loves in holy matrimony. We get a picture not only of beauty but purity. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The church is the bride of Christ.
5. It is a "holy City." Nothing can enter that would defile it. No evil or sin will ever exist there.

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6. The city is of pure gold. Even the street is gold but with a crystal appearance. Gold is very hard and enduring and is one of the most beautiful and sought after metals to be found in our world. It is also highly expensive.
7. All things will be new. Nothing will look old and used or worn out. Christ has gone to prepare this place for us but it is being held in reserve for the Day of Judgment. Heaven will not become a complete reality until the redeemed occupy it.
8. The River of Life runs through heaven. [Do you remember the Samaritan woman who wanted water that Jesus said he could give her?](#) The river in heaven gives us eternal life.
9. There is also the "Tree of Life." Someone has said that the Tree of Life which was first in the Garden of Eden has now been transplanted in heaven. The point here is that we can have eternal life with God where the soul never dies.
10. There is no flaming sword to prevent our entrance into this eternal city and no curse is placed on the ground, as was the case in the beginning of mankind. It is opened to all the redeemed.
11. There was no need for the sun or moon as the glory of God supplies its light.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN HEAVEN

1. There will be no tears in heaven. Tears are often the result of physical pain, loss of loved ones, heartaches, etc.
2. There will be no more death. Paul promised, "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death." Men have always stood in fear of death. Those in heaven will never again face death, only eternity with God.
3. There will be no more disappointments. Among the hardest burdens in life are disappointments. Often it is our brethren, someone that we have great confidence in. It may be a close friend, a preacher, an elder, a teacher, or a president of a school. Suddenly they turn their backs on everything that is descent and turn to the world. This was the case with Demas who turned his back on Paul and the church, "having loved this present world."
4. There will be no more pain. Because of the fall of Adam and Eve man no longer had access to the tree of life. Almost as soon as he is born he begins the process of dying. Over the years he will suffer many pains. Pain can be very disabling. Paul in [1 Corinthians 15:44](#) speaking of death said, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." The spiritual body is not subject to decay. There are no diseases or accidents in heaven. It cannot die.
5. In heaven there will be no more temptations. Paul addresses this problem in [Romans 7:15-25](#). To sum up these verses Paul says, "I really want to do right but I don't. I do what I do not want to do. I know it's wrong but I do it anyway. When I try not to do wrong I do it anyway. My problem is that sin has me in its grasp." It seems like a constant uphill battle. We overcome one sin, here comes another. When we think we have conquered something it suddenly returns. This is because Satan never lets up, but he will no longer be present to tempt us.
6. In heaven there will be no more guilt. Guilt can take a heavy toll on a person. Guilt is behind many physical and mental disorders. Faithful Christians often are the victims of guilt. Since God

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is so forgiving we often feel we are getting off to easy we feel we must punish ourselves. David said, "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). He also said, "Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sins" (Psalm 38:3).

7. There will be no more crime. To pick up a newspaper or see the news on TV can be very depressing. Spread across the front pages of our newspapers are stories of murder, drugs, gang war, corruption in high places, etc.

If for no other reason I want to go to heaven because of what will be missing. What a wonderful place where there is no temptation, no guilt, no disappointments, no crime, no pain, no death.

ESCHATOLOGY #10 Heaven – Part Two

Paul admonishes us to be heavenly minded. He says, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). He also wrote, "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1).

To be heavenly minded is also to live a life of faith in things that are not seen. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). It means to live for the world to come, not this present world. It means to see all of life from an eternal perspective. It means to live weighing every day in the light of eternity.

It is to live for that which is timeless, not temporal. It is to live for that which is spiritual, not tangible things. It is to live for that which invisible, not visible. [How then can we develop a passion for heaven? How can we live for an unseen future world rather than for the one we live in now?](#)

HEAVEN IS A DWELLING PLACE

In the book of Revelation John is taken on a guided tour of heaven and shown the glory of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. John was allowed to write a detail account of what will be our eternal dwelling. [Revelation chapters 4 and 5](#) have been described as "the throne room scene." John says that he saw a door standing open. He heard a voice calling for him to enter the room. He is ushered into the very throne room of God. Make no mistake about it, Heaven is a real place.

It is not an imaginary place, not a dream, not a superstition; it is an actual dwelling place. Jesus said it is a dwelling place. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2, 3).

LOCATION OF HEAVEN

[But where is it located?](#) We often use the expression "up in heaven." We think of heaven as "up." In fact the name "heaven" means "up." The Hebrew word for heaven means height and is plural indicating of great heights. The Greek word for heaven means an elevated place. The Jews spoke of three heavens.

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The **first** was the atmosphere where the birds fly, the **second** was the realm of the sun, moon and stars and the **third** was the dwelling place of God. Heaven then has to be outside the material universe because it is spiritual in nature.

John says he was transported **"immediately in the spirit"** into heaven. **How long did it take John's spirit to travel to heaven? Or did heaven come down to John for him to observe it? (See Revelation 21:2.)** We have already observed the vastness of the universe, so vast that it is beyond our comprehension. If God could create the heavens and the earth in an instant there would be no problem in His taking us into heaven immediately.

Besides John there have been others who have been given the privilege of seeing heaven. When God took Enoch we assume He took him to heaven (**Genesis 5:24**). Elijah (**2 Kings 2:1**) was taken to heaven. Ezekiel saw heaven (**Ezekiel 1:1**). Also Stephen saw heaven and God's glory (**Acts 7:55**). So did Paul (**2 Corinthians 12:2**). What a thrill when Christians will be granted the supreme privilege of seeing God.

SEEING GOD FACE TO FACE

Speaking of Jesus, John said, **"For we shall see Him as He is."** For people blinded from birth the first thing they will see will be Jesus. In **Exodus**, God told Moses, **"You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.....while My glory passes by.....you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen"** (See **Exodus 33:20-23**.)

Imagine – God's glory is so great and powerful we could not live and see him face to face, but in our immortal bodies we will see him face to face. Paul writes, **"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face"** (**1 Corinthians 13:12**). What an experience it will be to live where we will be surrounded by God's glory.

GOD SEATED ON HIS THRONE

Once John enters into heaven his attention is immediately focused on a throne. **"Behold a throne was standing in heaven,"** This is no ordinary throne it is God's throne. God's throne is the center of the universe. It is firmly set in place forever. The **Psalms** write, **"Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever"** (**Psalm 45:6**.) This is the place from which the entire universe is run. All creation – heaven, earth, even hell must answer directly to this throne.

It is here that He executes his administrative work over all creation. John also sees God sitting upon His throne. **Can you imagine what a breath taking experience this was for John – to see God Himself seated on his throne?**

GOD'S GLORY

Using the inadequate language of earth, John begins to describe God in all His glory. God is likened to a jasper and sardius stone (**4:3**). Jasper is a sparkling, crystal clear stone. It is known for its ability to refract light into many colors. John then sees bright colors, so bright they are blinding. He is beholding the brilliance of God's divine nature. Furthermore God appears as a sardius stone. This stone is a fiery deep red stone again revealing the brilliance of God's glory. The visual impact must have been overwhelming.

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A rainbow, like a halo of emerald green surrounds God and His throne. The rainbow following the universal flood is the sign God has given man that the earth never again will be destroyed this way. This rainbow surrounding God signifies that the grace of God will never allow His people to be destroyed.

In **verse 4** John sees 24 thrones surrounding God's throne. They are minor thrones with 24 elders sitting on them who are all the redeemed sitting before Him. They are wearing white robes with golden crowns on their heads. White robes represent the purity of the redeemed. Crowns are the eternal rewards for their faithful service.

In **verse 5** John sees something like a threatening electrical storm. It is a destructive force ready to strike those who have rejected Christ. God's wrath is ready to be unleashed upon His enemies. God's throne is not only a throne of mercy but a throne of judgment.

The eyes of John are awestruck by another scene "**And before the throne there was a sea of glass like crystal.**" Here we have a massive ocean, like perfect crystal under God's throne. This glistening gulf refracts the bright shining glory of God. It is like a solid pavement of pure, solid crystal on which the throne rests. Picture the beauty of this scene!

A brilliant rainbow of emerald green, sardis red, and Jasper white all reflecting off this sea of crystal of which displays the splendor of God's throne. Talk about a light show! Here is God's laser show, showing off His glory for all the universe to see.

Suddenly four creatures which we are unable to identify break into praise of God saying, "**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!**" Then suddenly the 24 elders begin to worship God. They "**cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "you are worth, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."**

They seem to be saying Lord you, and You alone are the one who deserves honor. We are not worthy of the crowns we wear. Were it not for you we would not even be here. Their worship seems to be incessant.

SURROUNDED BY AND LIVING IN THE MIDST OF GOD'S GLORY

Not until we reach heaven will we fully realize what the glory of God is like. However, John has given us enough word pictures to make us realize what a wonderful place heaven will be. No wonder Paul urges us to "**set your mind on things above.**" C. S. Lewis said, "**Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither.**"

The beauty and grandeur of God's glory is beyond our imagination. It is such that it surpasses any earthly or material glory we find here on this earth. It will be worth any sacrifices we have to make in order to share this eternal home with God our Father. But not only will we see the glorified body of our Lord, we too will be given glorified bodies.

Paul writes, "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together**" (Romans 8:16, 17).

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Heaven – Part Three

In our study of Hell and Heaven we have noted the number of metaphors the Holy Spirit has used. This is because having never seen or experienced what lies beyond this world in a spiritual body and a spiritual environment it is difficult for us to understand all that is involved. The use of metaphors helps us to understand to some degree what it will be like. Not recognizing the metaphors as figures of speech it is easy to attach a material meaning to them.

For example we often sing, "I'm satisfied with just a cottage below, a little silver and a little gold; but in that city where the ransomed will shine, I want a gold one that's silver lined. I've got a mansion just over the hill top," etc." Personally I have no desire for silver or gold. Neither do I have a desire to live in a white column mansion.

The 12 gates studded with precious stone and the street (not streets) of pure gold are not to be taken literal. If Heaven is nothing more than literal gold and precious stones we might be disappointed. Like king Midas one can tire of gold. It is the Holy Spirit using beautiful things to tell us of the grandeur and glory of Heaven.

Paul tells us that we are joint heirs with Christ; hence our inheritance is where Jesus is. The reward for Christians will be the associations we will have. Paul says that, "we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). There is no doubt that beauty will surround us but it is the associations we will have seem to be the primary reward.

WE WILL ASSOCIATE WITH ANGELS

Angels have always been a mystery. Like us, they are created beings. They have served God as special messengers (Revelation 1:1). They have also in some way worked in our behalf. Some think the providence that occurs in our behalf is the work of angels. They have always been our allies. They also attend God in all His heavenly splendor (Revelation 8:1-2). Our associations with them will no doubt reveal the answer to the many mysteries about them.

For example Jesus said, "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Do children have guardian angels?

We will share heaven with these glorious being from whom we no doubt will find many answers to such questions. While we will not become angels we will be changed in such a way that we will be "like" angels but not angels. This no doubt involves having spiritual bodies as angels have.

WE WILL ENJOY THE PRESENCE AND ASSOCIATION WITH THE REDEEMED

In Philippians 3:20 Paul says Christians are presently citizens of heaven but are planted on earth for the present. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to himself."

Thus all of us are destined to be together in heaven. There are a number of references that indicate we will know one another in heaven. All our imperfections will be absent. All sin will have vanished. What a wonderful environment.

ESCHATOLOGY IN HEAVEN WE WILL BE SURROUNDED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS

In heaven we will experience a new quality of life. Everything will be perfect. John says, "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as He is." To be like Him will be without the presence of sin. Thus all our imperfections will all be absent. All sin will have vanished. Again, what a wonderful environment this will be. Daily we are surrounded by sin even our own sins.

Sometimes we think, "If I could just run away and not have to see and hear all of the awful things that are going on constantly around me." If you are looking for a perfect environment then you will find it in heaven. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9 quotes Isaiah 64:4, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

IN HEAVEN WE SHALL SEE GOD

Of all the glories this will be the greatest. This is our real inheritance not gold, silver or a mansion. Our hope is centered on being with persons, not inheriting a place. Note what David says. "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You" (Psalm. 73:26). Paul declares, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out 'Abba, Father.'" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and join heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17).

John records words he heard from heaven. "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.'" (Revelation 21:3). Our real inheritance is to know, love, and see and to be with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

WE WILL LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR ETERNITY

Everything around us has a beginning and an end. We were born, then we live a certain period of time on earth and then we die. Everything around us is perishable. Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal (Matthew 6:19-20).

Here we see the contrast between earthly things and heavenly things. Nothing last forever on earth. Everything in heaven lasts forever. Even our universe had a beginning and it will have an end. It had its beginning when God created the heavens and the earth and will end when everything in the universe is destroyed by fire and heat.

It is difficult for us to think of something being eternal. We have never experienced such a situation in our experience, thus it is difficult to comprehend. We have all heard the illustration that if a bird were to pick up one grain of sand on the Atlanta coast and fly to the Pacific and deposit that grain then fly back and forth until it had carried every grain of sand from the Atlantic to the Pacific, eternity would just be beginning. But even in this illustration there is a period of time for this to be accomplished.

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God lives outside of space and time. He had no beginning and he has no end. It is impossible for the human mind to comprehend existence without an end. At the same time it is hard to comprehend that there never was a beginning with God. Everything around us has had a beginning but not so with God.

We say, "We will spend eternity in heaven." But this statement betrays our inability to say what it really means. "Spend" is a word for time. It expresses duration. In eternity there is no duration. There is no such thing as "time" in eternity. Again it comes down to the fact we are discussing an existence that is beyond our experience and our ability to comprehend, but we believe because God says there is eternity.

The Holy Spirit uses many metaphors that cause us to wonder, be amazed and be speechless. This is especially true when we are given descriptions of hell and heaven. To use a modern day phrase, "It blows our minds." There are actually few words in human language that can even come close to getting across the concept of eternity.

However, the Holy Spirit had to use human language to express to us something that is beyond our comprehension. Such words as **forever, endless, without end, eternal everlasting**, are about as close as we can get in human language.

The most satisfying explanation I have come across that appeals to me is that time was created by God for man's benefit, but God lives outside of time and space. Thus, it is always **NOW** with God. There are no clocks in heaven, neither is there what we call space. Space was created along with the universe. If God had no beginning and there will be no end then that leaves only **NOW**. God exists outside the universe and with Him it is always **NOW**.

The scriptures that best expresses this thought is **2 Peter 3:8**, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." One day and a thousand are the same since with God there is only now. Whether we ever understand this concept in this life is not of any great significance. We just know there will never be an end of heaven.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3, 4).

ESCHATOLOGY #12 Can I Make it to Heaven?

"If I should die right now, I don't know if God would save me or not." Have you ever heard this statement come from a faithful Christian? I have many times. I have also heard some say you will not know if you are saved until you die. Others have said, "I think so, but I am not sure." Some who have "gone forward" when the invitation was extended sometime in the past often continue to feel un-forgiven.

At the time they may have felt forgiven but soon doubt begins to creep in and they are once again wrapped in guilt and doubt. Some acknowledge God has forgiven them but they never seem to be able to forgive themselves. Some Christian will warn against feeling saved because Paul said, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

By Jimmy Eaton

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The argument is that you don't want to become too sure about your salvation on the first thing you know you will become careless, let down your guard and fall. **Does God want us to live a life of doubt? Does He want to keep us in suspense until the Day of Judgment?**

A group survey of some faithful Christians revealed that 74% of teens were unsure of their salvation. Amazingly 37% of those 65 and older could not with certainty say they felt they were going to heaven. We preach and teach the plan of salvation and encourage the lost to obey the gospel so they may have forgiveness of their sins.

This is supposed to be the **"Good News."** But after we baptize them do we leave the impression that no one can be absolutely certain about their salvation as many walk around feeling insecure about their salvation.

Let's get one thing straight as we look into this subject. Jesus is the only human being who ever lived a perfect life. There have been many faithful, zealous, devout Christians but not single one of them was ever perfect. You can take many of the well known Christians in the New Testament and you will find that none of them were perfect. They all had their flaws and sinned even after becoming Christian. Becoming a Christian does not make you perfect.

If you are faithful to God and His word you will certainly be a better person and your life will be changed to a great extent. Your goals and attitude will be different. However, you will not be perfect. There is nothing more repulsive than a self-righteous Christian who thinks he never does anything wrong but is quick to point out the sins and shortcomings in the lives of others.

John wrote to Christians and said, **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.....If we say that we have not sinned we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."** (1 John 1:8, 10).

Paul incites the whole human race when he wrote, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23). This is why there had to be the cross. In instituting the Lord's Supper Jesus said, **"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"** (Matthew 26:28). It is the blood of Christ that makes it possible for us to avoid the punishment we deserve for our sins because He took our place and received the punishment we should have received.

When you were baptized you were washed in His blood and thus made free from all your past sins. Ananias a Christian told Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of Christians, **"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"** (Acts 22:16). By being baptized into Christ it put you into a relationship with Jesus where you will continue to be under His cleansing blood.

Thus, John goes ahead to tell sinning Christians, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:9).

To walk **"according to the Spirit"** is to walk according to the teachings of the Holy Spirit as it was recorded by the inspired writers of the New Testament. To **"walk according to the Spirit"** does not imply one will walk a perfect walk for that would be impossible. As already noted only Jesus lived a perfect life.

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One of the most assuring and comforting Scriptures in all of the New Testament is **1 John 1:7-9**. John writes: **"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

The word **"walk"** in this verse can be rendered **"If we keep on walking."** Our walk must be a continual walk. This walk must be in the light (**righteousness**) as God is in the light. If our daily conduct is modeled after Jesus then we are in a right relationship with him. Fellowship with God is conditional then. God's grace is not a license to do as we please. Obviously if we are not interesting in walking in the light then this breaks our fellowship with God.

There are two results from walking in the light: **(1)** we have fellowship with God and **(2)** the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. The word **"cleanses"** is in the present tense thus it can be rendered **"keeps on cleansing."**

Thus as Christians keep on walking in the light the blood of Jesus keeps on cleaning them of their sins. Again this does not demand a perfect walk as only Jesus has been able to do that. Using Jesus as our model we can try and model our lives after Him although we will never be perfect as He was. This is why grace had to be introduced because God knew we could never live perfect lives and keep his law perfectly.

What greater assurance can a child of God ask for than these encouraging words from the apostle John. The realization of how weak and unworthy we are often causes our conscience to condemn us. John must have anticipated there would be those who would be so overcome with guilt that they would allow guilt to rob them of any assurance of salvation.

Thus later in his same epistle **(3:20-21)** he writes, **"For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God."**

Regardless of what we may feel in our hearts, God's promises are greater than any feelings we may have. If we can have the approval of our hearts we will have a greater amount of confidence. It is easy to let feelings overrule the abiding promises of God. We must learn to put our trust in God instead of our feelings.

According to **verse 22** the proof that God approves us is His willingness to answer our prayers. Prayer is answered because we do His will and do the things which are pleasing to Him. **"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."** Our obedience may not be perfect but God sees that our attitude is that we seek to please him thus He allows the blood of His Son to keep on **"cleaning"** us of our sins.

Yes we can be certain we will make it to heaven. God does not want us to walk around with feelings of uncertainty. Rather he wants us to have a spirit of confidence, not doubt. He wants us to have the **"peace of God which surpasses all understanding, (and that it) will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."**