

Man's Final Destination

In Matthew 25:46, we read that some people will go away into 'everlasting punishment' and others into 'live eternal'.

Matthew 25:46

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

This verse and many others in the Bible teach us that when our bodies die, we continue to have a consciousness. Eventually, our bodies will be resurrected, some to 'everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt'.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

According to the Bible, we will exist somewhere forever, either in the Lake of Fire ('Hell') or the New Jerusalem ('Heaven'). These two locations are described in the Bible, especially in the final three chapters of the book of Revelation.

In this study, we will first look at the Lake of Fire: 1) a place prepared for the devil and his angels, 2) a place of suffering, 3) an eternal place, 4) a place of justice, and 5) a place that can be avoided. We will also look at the new heavens and new earth, many different aspects of the New Jerusalem, and what all this means for us.

KEY VERSE: John 3:16-17 *'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.'*

BOOKS TO MEMORISE: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts

CHAPTERS TO READ THIS WEEK: Genesis 30-36

THE LAKE OF FIRE

While most people have no problem accepting the idea of an eternal heaven, the idea of an eternal place of suffering is much more difficult to accept. Despite our discomfort, the Bible, and especially Jesus Himself, teaches truths about both everlasting life in heaven and everlasting punishment in the lake of fire.

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is a book that contains many things about the end times, but it is more than that. Ultimately, it reveals Jesus Christ and His final plans for the world and for mankind.

Revelation 1:1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

After a terrible period in which the wrath of God is poured on the world, Jesus Christ will return with His armies to defeat the nations that rebel against Him and to set up His rule on this earth.

The leaders of this earthly rebellion (the beast and the false prophet) will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone ('burning stone' or sulphur).

Revelation 19:20

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

1. A PLACE SPECIFICALLY PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS

This *lake of fire* that burns with brimstone (Rev 19:20) is a different place from what is commonly referred to as *hell* in other parts of the Bible.

The word *hell* is sometimes used **generally for the grave** (place for the departed - the grave) and sometimes as a **place of punishment for the wicked after death**. The context helps us to know which is referred to.

Luke 16:23

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. [Hell = place of torment]

Psalms 16:10

'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' [Hell = grave]

This lake of fire was specifically prepared for the devil and his angels who rebelled against God.

Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Revelation 20:1-10

v.1-3 An angel comes with a key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. This angel lays hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil ('slanderer') and Satan ('adversary/enemy') and binds him for a thousand years. Satan is cast into the bottomless pit and shut with a seal so he cannot go out and deceive the nations for a thousand years.

v.4-6 Then we see thrones and people reigning with Christ for 1000 years. There has been the first resurrection of all the righteous unto life and to enter Christ's long awaited and much anticipated kingdom. Those who do not have part in the first resurrection are those who will come under the curse of the second death.

v.7-9 Satan will be loosed after the 1000 years. He will go out and deceive the nations again. This nations will be defeated soundly by fire from heaven.

v.10 The devil will be finally cast into the place God prepared for Him - the lake of fire and brimstone. Satan will not rule and reign in hell; He will suffer the worst in hell.

2. A PLACE OF SUFFERING

Revelation 20:10

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

As its name implies, the 'lake of fire' is a place of torment (severe suffering).

The Suffering of Separation from God

Death is not the cessation of existence; it is the separation of body from soul and spirit. It is also the separation of man from God. When Adam and Eve sinned; they 'died' in that they were cut off from God, the life source.

The lake of fire is a place of total separation from God, and therefore from all that He provides (light, love, peace, pleasure, and fulfilment).

That's why the lake of fire is called 'the second death' (Rev 20:6,14; 21:8); it is the second separation from God

2 Thessalonians 1:8–10

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Matthew 7:23

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The Suffering of Unquenchable Fire

Luke 16:23–24

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 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.

Mark 9:44–49

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

The Suffering of Intense Darkness

Jude 13

raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Matthew 22:13

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. AN ETERNAL PLACE

Revelation 20:10

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Notice that this is the place where the beast and the false prophet are who were cast there some 1000 years before.

They are still there, and they, along with Satan, will be tormented day and night forever and ever. This torment will go on forever and ever.

Some has suggested that maybe the judgment will take place and then eventually be over - *annihilation*. The problem with this idea is that you cannot say that heaven is forever but the lake of fire is not.

Just as some will reign forever and ever, others will be tormented forever and ever.

Revelation 22:5

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Jesus uses the same word to describe punishment as He does for life (everlasting = eternal).

Matthew 25:46

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

In Jude, we read that Sodom and Gomorrha suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

Jude 7

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

4. A PLACE OF JUSTICE

Revelation 20:11-14

v.11 There is a great white throne (symbolising purity) with God on it - Jesus Christ.

John 5:22

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

The heaven and earth flee from this the face of the One on the throne. (Perhaps this is when they are destroyed, making way for the new heaven and earth (Rev 21:1).)

v.12-13 The dead stand before God.

Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

These are the 'wicked dead'. The 'righteous dead' have already been raised (Rev 20:5-6).

No person will escape this judgment.

v.12 The 'small' and the 'great' are there.

v.13 Those in the sea are there. Those who are dead and in hell (temporary holding place) give up the bodies of those who have died to stand and be judged.

v.12 The dead are judged out of books.

This is not a careless trial without any evidence. These books contain the works of every man. Everything every man has ever done or said is recorded and builds the case against him.

Matthew 12:36–37

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

v.14 All those who have died without being right with God will be cast into the lake of fire. They will be eternally separated from God in what is called ‘the second death’.

v.15 Everyone who is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of the fire.

They will be tormented for all eternity along with the beast, the false prophet and Satan.

Because they chose to follow the path of Satan for whom this awful place was prepared, they will endure the terrible torture, fire, and blackness forever.

The lake of fire was never originally intended for man, but those who choose to follow Satan’s path will suffer his same fate.

When the books are open at this final judgment, the books will not lie.

The books will reveal that those who are cast in the lake of fire have followed their own path, gone their own way, and done their own thing.

The books will reveal that they have rejected God, even though He did everything in His power, including giving His only begotten Son, to rescue them.

No one will go to the lake of fire unjustly.

5. A PLACE THAT CAN BE AVOIDED

The Great White Throne judgment does not decide one's journey, rather it confirms it. The decision of where you will go when you die is determined during your life on earth.

The problem for all of us is that all of us fall short of God's righteous standards and none of have works good enough to earn heaven.

The good news is that even though we deserve the lake of fire and even though we cannot rescue ourselves, we can still be rescued from sin and eternal torment through the work of God's Saviour and Deliverer Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53:4-6

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, And carried our sorrows: Yet we did esteem him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon him; And with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned every one to his own way; And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The book of life contains either those who have been written in through believing on Jesus or those who have not been blotted out through rejecting Jesus.

Revelation 20:15

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

There is some debate about whether 'the book of life' and 'the Lamb's book of life' are the same book or different books.

Regardless of your view, the point is that God will spare those who are written in the book of life. The way we escape is to have our names written in heaven through faith in Jesus Christ.

Luke 10:20

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

The key question is what we do with Jesus.

John 3:36

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

God does not want anyone to perish.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Ezekiel 33:11

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

HEAVEN & THE NEW JERUSALEM

The final word of Scripture does not end with the lake of fire. Instead, it ends with Heaven and the New Jerusalem. It ends with a warm welcome to all who will believe on Jesus to come into this place of eternal bliss with God.

1. THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Revelation 21:1

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The earth in which we currently live and the heavens (atmosphere and outer space) we currently have will one day be destroyed.

2 Peter 3:10–12

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

This truth should motivate us to focus our efforts not on that which will last - living a holy and godly life and laying up treasures in heaven, not on this earth.

Matthew 6:19–20

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

The new heaven and the new earth will be completely different from the first.

Rev 21:1 'No more sea' - The current earth is 75% covered by water

Rev 21:23 No sun, moon, or stars.

There is much that we do not know about, but what we do know is that it will be NEW!

2. THE NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:2-22:5

The main emphasis of the eternal state is on the new Jerusalem where God will dwell with men and where we will live for all eternity. Notice some things about this city:

a. A holy city (21:2) 'a holy city'

This is in contrast to earthly Jerusalem which is described as spiritual "Sodom" in Rev 11:8 because of the sin and pollution.

No unholy person will be allowed in this city (see Rev 22:15). All the unrighteous including Satan and his demons will have been cast into the Lake of Fire in Revelation 20.

b. A city from God (21:2) ‘coming down from God out of heaven’

This indicates that it already existed before the new heaven and new earth were made.

It is no doubt the place where God dwells with his people and where those who die go to be with God.

It is no doubt the place that Jesus was talking about when He said, ‘I go to prepare a place for you’ in John 14:2.

c. A dazzlingly beautiful city (21:2) “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”

No woman puts more effort into looking beautiful than her wedding day. That is the idea here. Every effort has been made to make this city as beautiful as possible. It is absolutely radiant!

d. A city where God and man live TOGETHER, FOREVER (21:3)

When God told Israel to build the tabernacle and the temple, there was a special place, called the ‘holy of holies’, where only the high priest could go once a year with a sacrifice.

In a very real and practical sense, once man sinned he could no longer dwell in God’s presence. Today, in our corruptible bodies, we are unable to stand in His presence.

But when Jesus died, the veil that separated the ‘holy of holies’ and God’s presence from the common person was torn letting us know that through Jesus Christ is now possible to come into God’s presence. Heaven is the final fulfilment of this truth.

Hebrews 10:19–22

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The best part of heaven is that God is there!

‘Behold’, the tabernacle (tent/dwelling place) of God is with men.

God will dwell with men, and we get to be His people!

GOD HIMSELF shall be with us and be our God!

e. A city where all things are made new (21:4-5)

All tears shall be wiped away from men’s eyes by God. There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying. There will be no more pain!

All the former things (everything to do with the previous fallen world) will pass away. God is making all things new. He is wiping the slate clean and making all of creation new.

In sense, this is the spiritual reality of what happens when we believe on Jesus Christ. We have the same body, but our identity is totally made new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

f. A real city (21:5-6)

The One on the throne (God the Son) has to 'remind' John to 'Write, because these things are true and faithful.' (In other words, you can= count on them; this is going to happen!) It all might sound too good to be true, but it is not!

God says, 'It is done'. This does not mean that it is over, but that it is ready.

God guarantees it as the Alpha (first Greek letter) and the Omega (last letter), the beginning and the end.

God was there in the beginning. He will be there in the end.

g. An accessible city (21:6-7).

God promised to give freely of the water of life to those who thirst.

Jesus Christ died on the cross so all men could freely access that which they need - forgiveness, eternal life, satisfaction, a restored relationship with God.

The one who overcomes will inherit all things. God promised to be His God and he would be God's son. We overcome by believing the One who has already overcome!

1 John 5:1-5

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

You can be an overcomer through believing on Jesus, which births you into God's family and makes you an overcomer as well.

This life and city are accessible to all who believe on Jesus. There's no charge and no membership fee. Just believe!

h. An exclusive city (21:8)

Even though all can gain access, not everyone will gain access. Some will refuse to turn from their sin and turn to believe on Jesus. These people are characterised by their sin:

fearful - afraid of what it might mean to believe on Jesus

unbelieving - main sin is the sin of unbelief

abominable - doing things that God does not like

murderers - everyone has a part in the murder of Christ

whoremongers - sexually immoral

sorcerers - indulging in magic and seeking power through means other than God

idolaters - put other things before God

liars - opposite of God's nature which is true (Rev 21:5)

Those who love their sin and do not believe on Jesus Christ will be excluded from this wonderful place. They will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur - which is the second death.

Don't miss heaven! Don't be deceived by sin! It will lead you to the lake of fire.

i. A glorious city (21:9-11)

One of the angels who open the vials of plagues in Revelation 16 came and talked with John and said, Let me show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.

In the vision, John was taken away into a great and high mountain to get some kind of perspective on the vastness of this city.

This great city, this holy Jerusalem, that descended out of heaven from God has the glory of God.

The light of the city was like a very precious jewel, clear as crystal. (Jasper today is opaque, but the 'jasper' talked about here is probably more like a diamond by today's definitions.)

j. A unified city (21:12-14)

The city has a great wall with twelve gates and twelve angels guarding each gate. On the gates are written names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, three on each side.

The city also has twelve foundations in which were the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The city includes both Israel & the church.

Hebrews 12:22-24

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

All things are brought together under one common head - Christ.

Ephesians 1:10

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

k. A huge city (21:15-17)

The angel that talked with John had a golden reed (probably signifying that it was given to him by God to use). He used the reed to measure the city, the gates, and the wall.

The city is 12,000 furlongs (stadion) wide and long. A furlong is about 11/100th of a mile, so 12,000 furlongs equal about 1,342 miles. This would be 1.8 million square miles at the base, which is larger than the country of India.

The city is also 1,342 miles high which creates an incredible amount of space. (A building that tall with twelve feet per level could have 600,000 levels).

The wall was measured at 144 cubits (216 feet) - probably talking about the width.

There is plenty of space in this city for you and everyone who has ever lived.

One person estimated that if you ignore public spaces and put everyone in a prison-cell-sized room, you could fit a billion billion people (1 with 18 zeros behind it) in the New Jerusalem.

It is estimated that just over 100 billion have ever lived. If the city was divided evenly, each person would get a house that was 1,500 ft on one side and 150 stories high (12 square miles of living space)!

l. A wealthy city (21:18-21)

The walls are of jasper which is clear according to Revelation 21:11.

The city itself is of pure gold like clear glass (allowing the light of God to shine throughout).

The foundations of the wall of the city were decorated with all types of beautiful and precious stones.

The gates are one gigantic pearl and the streets are pure gold.

If God can use gold for paving and building, and lay precious stones in the foundations, then why would we crave the wealth of this world?

m. A city of light and worship (21:22-27)

There will be no temple because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are there.

There will be no sun or moon because God's glory will light up the entire city.

All nations (peoples) who are saved will walk in God's light. Kings of the earth will come before God to honour and glorify Him.

There will be no need to shut the gates because there will be no night.

Everyone will come to glorify and honour God.

The only people allowed in the city are the righteous. No defiled, abominable, or liar will be allowed. Only those written in the Lamb's book of life.

n. A city of eternal life (22:1-4)

A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, will come from the throne of God (Father) and the Lamb (Son).

In the midst of the street and on either side of the river, is the tree of life, producing twelve different kinds of fruit with a different kind each month.

The leaves of the tree are healing (health) for the nations. (Not that we will have bad health, because there will be no more curse.)

The throne of God and the Lamb will be there.

We, His servants, will serve God forever. We will see His face and be so close that His name will be in our foreheads.

o. A city of eternal day (22:5)

Finally, every child will love heaven because there will be NO BEDTIME!

There will be no night there and no need for a candle or even the sun. The Lord God will give us light and we will reign for ever and ever. It will be one eternal day.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

Revelation 22:6-21

1. These things are true (22:6).

2. These things are going happen soon (22:6-10).

v.6-7 We will be blessed if you listen and believe what this book says.

v.8-9 John was overwhelmed by seeing all this and hearing all this. He fell down to worship the angel and was rebuked.

v.10 John is told not to seal the book but let everyone know, 'the time is at hand.' (This is in contrast to what Daniel was told in Daniel 8:26.)

3. Now is the time to change, because soon it will be too late (22:11-15).

The idea here is not that we should remain the way we are. Instead, though God wants man to repent and believe on Him, in the time that is left, no major changes can be expected.

Certainly, once Christ returns and we enter eternity, we will remain as we were when we died - unjust, filthy, righteous, holy.

Jesus is coming quickly and has His reward with Him.

Those who do Jesus' commandments will have a right to the tree of life and may enter the gates.

Those who do not will be left without - dogs (sinners), sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a life.

4. Come and accept Christ's free gift of salvation (22:16-17).

Jesus who is revealed to us in this book has given His angel to tell us these things.

Jesus is the root and offspring of David. He came from the line of David.

Jesus is the bright and morning star - all light and life begin with Him.

Jesus wants men to come to Him.

The Holy Spirit of God and the bride (the church) say, COME!

The one who hears the invitation and believes invites others to COME!

The one who is thirsty, who longs for this city, this life, this eternity, this relationship with God, should COME!

Come and take the water of life found in Jesus FREELY!

5. Don't mess with God's book (22:18-19).

God is serious about His book. He does not want it tampered with.

He says don't add to it and don't take away from it.

6. Get ready (22:20-21).

Jesus is coming quickly! And all God's people should say, AMEN!

In the meantime, His grace will sustain us. AMEN!