

Lesson 12: An Eternal Reward

Introduction: The End of the Age

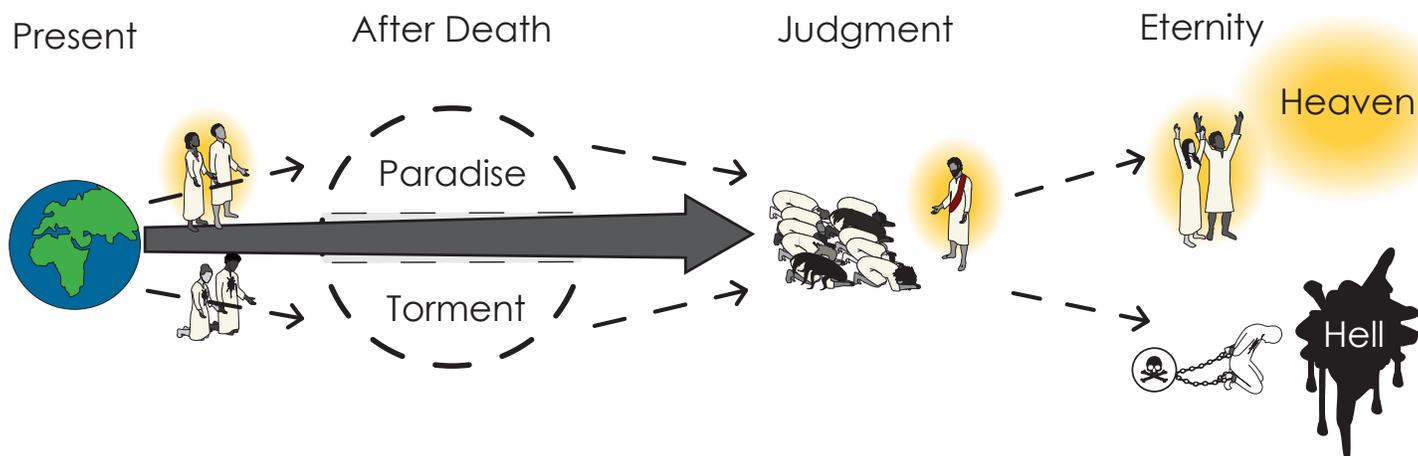
The Christian Age will continue until the Lord Jesus returns to bring judgment on the world. God is patient. He wants all men to be saved.¹ Eventually, there will come a time when God will decide that He has been patient long enough. He will begin the end of time by sending Jesus back. No one knows the exact time of Jesus' return except God the Father.² The promise we have is that Jesus will return, and until He does, we should live for Him!

The Bible says Jesus will come like a thief in the night. This means that no one will anticipate the time. He will appear in the sky with angels and all of mankind (both living and dead) will be called to the judgment. When all are assembled, all people will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord.³ After this assembly comes judgment and an eternal reward.



The Judgment

Everyone who has ever lived, from the very first man to you and me, will face judgment. The Bible says that the books will be opened and our lives will bear witness for us. Our life will either demonstrate faithfulness or rebellion to God.⁴ The blood of Jesus will cover the sins of those who have faithfully obeyed His gospel. The names of those who are saved will be found in the book of Life. Those names that are not found will be cast into eternal Hell.⁵ This Judgment is a sentencing. No one will be able to argue their case before God. None will be able to change the sentence they receive. God will sentence each soul for the life lived (either in faith or in rebellion).



¹ 2 Peter 3:9

² Matthew 24:36; 2 Peter 3:10-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

³ 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Philippians 2:10

⁴ See *Christian Basics: Judgment: Who Will Be Judged?*

⁵ Revelation 20:11-15

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think God has not revealed the exact time of Jesus' return?
- Is Judgment Day something that only Christians should worry about?

Hell: An Eternal Banishment from God



Hell is a part of God's will. This punishment was not initially for man; God designed Hell for the devil and his fallen angels.⁶ Hell became necessary for man after the rebellion in the Garden of Eden.⁷ While some prefer not to think about Hell, people must realize what lies ahead, if they do not repent. Hell has a threefold purpose: punishment, destruction, and banishment from God.⁸

The Bible uses the five physical senses to describe Hell (hearing, touch, taste, sight, and smell). These are intended to be examples of a *spiritual* future. Our minds may think about these senses in a physical way, but the Bible uses them to describe a spiritual punishment:

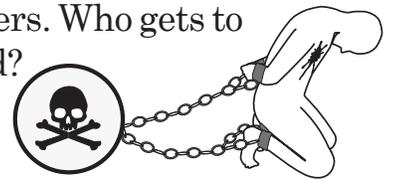
- **Hearing:** Constant weeping and gnashing teeth in pain will be heard in Hell.⁹
- **Touch:** Eternal fire, pain, and worm that continually eats the souls in Hell.¹⁰
- **Taste** (or lack thereof): Hell is compared to unquenchable thirst.¹¹
- **Sight** (or lack thereof): Hell as a place of total darkness.¹²
- **Smell:** The constant rot and burning will fill the nostrils of those in Hell.¹⁰

Who Will Be in Hell?

Satan and his fallen angels will be cast into Hell.¹³ Beyond these spirits, who will be sent there? While no human is the judge of another's soul, we should understand what the Bible teaches: the way to heaven is difficult, and the way to Hell is easy.

“Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, there are few who find it.”¹⁴

Some believe that Hell is reserved for the most terrible sinners. Who gets to decide which sins are terrible and which ones can be overlooked? The Bible teaches that all sins—that have not been forgiven—are punishable in God's judgment.



This is why Christians take the good news all over the world. Anyone *can* be saved.¹⁵ However, Jesus' death doesn't mean everyone *will* be saved. It means that we have the *opportunity* to be saved, if we are willing to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ! What about good and moral people who do not believe in God and obey Jesus' gospel? The Bible teaches that being a good person does not get rid of sin. Only God's grace and an obedient faith in Jesus Christ can save us from Hell.¹⁶

⁶ Matthew 25:31, 2 Peter 2:20-22

⁷ 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, Romans 6:23

⁸ 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7, Revelation 20:15

⁹ Luke 13:27-28

¹⁰ Mark 9:43-48

¹¹ Luke 16:24

¹² Matthew 8:12

¹³ Revelation 20:10

¹⁴ Matthew 7:13-14

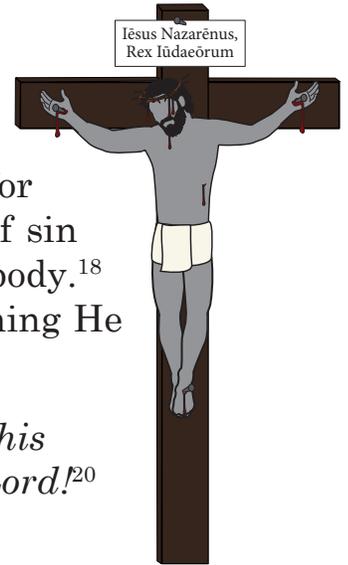
¹⁵ Galatians 3:26-28

¹⁶ John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 John 5:12

Jesus Paid the Price

Hell is a terrible reward for the unrighteous. However, those who have faith do not face the threat of Hell. It was taken care of in God's plan for redemption. Jesus took away this future for anyone who believes and obeys. Jesus faced the *punishment* of sin for us.¹⁷ Jesus' sacrifice ended in death, the *destruction* of His body.¹⁸ Jesus was momentarily separated from God's fellowship, meaning He was *banished*.¹⁹ Thank God for Jesus! The Bible says:

*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*²⁰



Heaven: An Eternal Home with God

There are many descriptions of heaven in the last book of the Bible, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (commonly referred to as *Revelation*). This Christian prophecy tells of the struggle between good and evil for the hearts of mankind. It ends with the victory of Jesus over the devil and the beginning of an age called Eternity. The book of Revelation says:

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. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*²¹

We know that heaven is a place where all the symptoms of sin are taken away. There will be no more pain or suffering. People will not lose loved ones to death. Hatred, evil, and all the devil's greatest weapons of darkness will not exist. We will live as we were meant to be: in perfection and in God's presence! The Bible says:

*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*²²

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹⁸ Mark 15:42-47

¹⁹ Matthew 27:4-6

²⁰ Romans 7:24-25

²¹ Revelation 21:3-5

²² Revelation 22:1-3

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Hell is such a terrible place?
- What is one of the greatest hopes you look forward to concerning Heaven?

The tree of Life, God’s gift to Adam and Eve so long ago, is planted in Heaven. It symbolizes a complete restoration of the relationship between God and man. There shall be no night there: we will not need a lamp nor light from the sun, for the Lord God gives light. God's faithful shall live forever and ever in perfection with the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and the Father.



Are You Ready?

In the very last verses of the Bible, Jesus speaks. The man writing was the apostle John. Jesus says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” John was so excited to know this that he responded by declaring, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”²³

What about you? Are you ready for Jesus to come back? That question has eternal consequences, and we hope that you are ready. This series has covered over a thousand pages of information from the Bible in a twelve brief studies. While there is more information in the Bible, all should be able to appreciate one very important point: Jesus came to the world to redeem sinners, among whom we all are included.

*Series Review*²⁴

In the beginning, God created everything. Mankind was made in His image with an immortal soul. When given the gift of choice, man chose to deny God and obey self. This unleashed sin which corrupted the world with pain, suffering, and death. Man, alone, struggled against sin and could not find a way to save himself from spiritual death.

But God had a plan. At just the right time, He sent Jesus to the earth. Jesus showed the way, lived a sinless life, and was killed on the cross. His death and glorious resurrection offers man the chance to be saved from spiritual death, if man chooses to believe and obey God. Through obeying the gospel, we can all be saved from spiritual death and live forever in Heaven with God!

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

²³ Revelation 22:20

²⁴ See *Christian Basics: The Story of the Bible*