

## Heaven And That Other Place

Heaven is described in vivid detail in Revelation 21-22 and we speak of it often. Heaven is the eternal inheritance for the Christian available to mankind because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Not because of our own goodness, but because we have chosen to accept the grace and mercy of Jesus to be the Lord of our lives and thereby have an inheritance in that glorious eternal home.

Part of that description is Revelation 21:4-8 *‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’* 5 *He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”* Then he said, *“Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”* 6 *He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.*

Note the very next verse of our passage that starts with encouragement for the Christian ends with this dire warning; Revelation 21:4-7 states the following in verse 8 as Wilkinson alludes: **8** *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

In one sense even that warning is an encouragement for Christians in that it reveals clearly that our earthly antagonists will receive the just consequences of their life choices. And it reinforces the wisdom and reward for making a decision for Jesus and learning and living for His glory.

To help in this explanation of heaven and that other place I prepared the chart in the bulletin with scripture references to show where people go when they die. Please look at it as I explain:

<u>Old Testament Dispensation</u>	<u>New Testament Dispensation</u>	<u>Eternal Dispensation</u>
Hebrew language	Greek Language	Heaven’s language
sheol* – realm of dead	hades* – realm of dead	
paraidse = Abrahams side (Lk 23:43 Lk16:22)	Heaven Php 3:20 (Php 3:20)	new heaven & earth (Rev 21:1)

## chasm

hell=tortment=pit=sheol (Lk 16:23)	gehenna=hell=punishment (Jam 3:6) tartarus for fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4)	lake of fire (Rev 20:14)
---------------------------------------	---	-----------------------------

The chart is divided into three sections called dispensations: It will be helpful if you can slide your finger along the chart as I explain so you can keep track of where I am:

The definition of the word dispensation as it is used in this context is: “a system of order, government, or organization of a nation, community, etc., especially as existing at a particular time:” i.e.

The Old Testament dispensation covers the period of time from creation and all of the Old Testament books and technically clear through the 4 gospel books of the New Testament into the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts. Jesus lived, died and was resurrected during that Old Testament period of time to establish what we call the “church age”

or the New Testament Dispensation starting on the Day of Pentecost in the books after Acts chapter 3 through Revelation chapter 21, until the renewal of the earth.

The eternal dispensation is everything afterward.

The Old dispensational record was written primarily in Hebrew, the New dispensational record written primarily in Greek. The gospel books I included in the Old were mostly in Greek because they were actually penned during the New Testament Dispensation but whose contents were of the Old Testament dispensation.

In Hebrew the word that describes the realm of all the dead is “sheol” and in Greek the same concept is described by the word hades. You will notice the little star by sheol and hades indicating reference to the bottom of the chart that explains that sometimes translators have translated sheol as hell, or hades as hell but grammatically correct is “the realm of the dead.” You must examine the scriptural content carefully to see which meaning is intended.

The Old Dispensation sheol is divided into 1) paradise which is the same as Abraham’s bosom with scriptural references noted. They are separated by a great chasm The same concept in the New Testament is simply heaven which leads to the New Heaven and earth in the eternal dispensation.

2) Likewise in sheol or realm of the dead division of the Old Testament is hell also called the pit. Sometimes sheol can be confusing because it also refers to the place of punishment, the context reveals the meaning.//// In the New Testament the same concept is gehenna which is hell or the place of punishment. But there is an additional word used in 2 Peter that describes the deepest place in hell as tartarus which is the destiny of fallen angels.////In the eternal dispensation gehenna is called the lake of fire.

My intent in graphing this is to show the different terminology used to express the same things.

Now all of that is crystal clear in your minds – let’s take a look at a specific description of the contrast of heaven and hell illustrated in Luke 16. Lay aside the chart and open a Bible to Luke 16 starting with verse 19 and again follow along with your finger on the text as a commentary is given: Verses 19-21 gives the earthly, pre-death description of the men in the story: **19** *“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.”* // That is a pretty painful description of the contrast of the men’s earthly lives:

Next we get a death destination of each of the men in verses 22-23 as we learned about earlier in the chart: **22** *“The time came when the beggar died (that is Lazarus,) and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. (that is paradise or heaven) The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades (that is in the realm of the dead which in this case was hell, torment, the pit, gehenna or as applied to many other descriptive terms that are used throughout the scripture), In Hades where he (the rich man) was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.”* // It is of note that angels are used to transport Lazarus to heaven while the rich man is only said to be buried! // verse **24** *So he (the dead rich man) called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’* // **1-** Residents of that “other place of punishment” can see the glory of those in heaven. Part of eternal punishment is seeing “what could have been.” **2-** In “the other place” torment had begun, we can only presume how terrible it is. Perhaps the worst of it is, there is no possible escape or reprieve, you cannot, not exist (or die because you are already dead) **3-** A little bit of what the residents of hell will experience is revealed in verse 25 with the response of Abraham:// **25** *“But Abraham replied, ‘Son (the rich man), remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 4-* Next is verse 26 with this amazing statement as Abraham continues:// **26** *And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’* // There exists a chasm or barrier between heaven and hell that cannot be crossed. (as noted on the chart) There is not going to be any second chance to change one’s mind once they have reached the destination of hell. **5-** But the rich man in hell is not finished with his plea: // **27** *“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’* // The rich man now understood he could not escape his ill chosen destiny, but he still hoped that perhaps there was another alternative for his family who were still alive: // **29** *“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ 30* *“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’*

31 "He (Abraham) said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

It is interesting Abraham did not answer that no one could rise from the dead to go back and speak to those still alive, instead he made it clear that the revelation of God's truth and purpose of mankind was made available to them while on earth, Abraham knew the hardened hearts of persons on earth, and that even if someone from the dead did appear to them, it would not affect their preconceived notions, just like the rich man himself had chosen.

This is not some new 21<sup>st</sup> century revelation, // for it has been around in one form or another since Genesis 3. For instance look at these verses from the last book of the Old testament canon as God is dealing with a similar situation:

Malachi 3:13-18 "You have said harsh things against me," says the LORD. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?' 14 "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? 15 But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.'" // 16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. 17 "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

Also from the first book of the New Testament canon: Matt 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

[{ One last thing to challenge your thinking. // Though the Bible does not directly and categorically state there are levels of punishment in hell and levels of reward in heaven there are some intriguing verses that suggest as much, for instance Rom 2:5-11 *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism.*

Bruce Wilkinson: "Here's a helpful way to remember the truth of degrees of compensation: Heaven never gets worse, only better; hell never gets better, only worse."

We touched on this verse earlier: 2 Peter 2:4 *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;* You now remember that word translated “hell” here is really tartarus in the Greek. That is the lowest confines of the place of eternal punishment. The fact there are two places of punishment implies there are degrees of punishment.

Luke 12 seems to also imply that hell has different levels of punishment. These words come directly from Jesus Christ. Luke 12:47-48 says, *“The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”* Reading these verses seems to imply that there may be different degrees of punishment in hell.

Other interesting verses that suggest there are ‘degrees’ of reward for the righteous: Matt 16:27 *For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done.* And Eph 6:7-8 *Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. ]}*

**The application for today** is to gain knowledge and understanding that “the Other Place” is a real place, a place at all costs is to be avoided, and that Heaven is also a real place, a place to seek and find and share the good news with others ab out getting there. You might want to take some time this week and read Luke 16:19-31 again and make notes of your decision and life goals as a result of having a picture of hell and heaven with that absolute clear understanding - that only you can chose. Each person in this life makes a choice for their eternal destiny/// heaven or “That Other Place.”

We are going to stand and sing an invitation hymn. Printed inside the bulletin cover is our explanation of what decision for you to consider as we sing.