

Heaven and Hell

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to Revelation 21, 1 to 8. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

Also he said, Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. And 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 from the spring of the water of life, without payment.

[1 : 03] The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Okay, so as we begin this evening, you'll see I want to begin with a question, and I know it's a question many of you have been asking.

When are we going to get to heaven and hell? Not just in the talks, of course, but in the history of the cosmos. Because this morning, we picked up stumps, really, we finished, in the Old Testament, right?

Or actually in the New Testament, but the New Testament, when it's still sort of the Old Testament, right? Just before Jesus' death and resurrection. Right? We talked about the experience of the Old Testament saints versus the experience of the wicked in Sheol, the underworld.

But actually, post Jesus' death and resurrection, and through Jesus' death and resurrection, a bunch of things change. So, let's make sure we're up to speed.

[2 : 16] First, where did Jesus go when he died? Remember he told the thief on the cross, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. So I used to think that that must have meant that when Jesus died, immediately he went to heaven.

And please forgive me, because I'm sure I've taught some of you this at some point. But I think now that actually I was wrong, hopefully I'm making progress. So now, you see, given everything we looked at this morning, I think that Jesus was talking about this little slice of heavenly paradise down in Sheol.

After all, Jesus also said things like, in Matthew chapter 12, verse 40, for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

And he means Sheol. And in fact, that's just how Jonah described his journey too. If you remember, he talks about being in Sheol in chapter 2 when he's in the belly of the fish.

Some people actually think that Jonah died and then came back to life in the belly of the great fish. I'm not necessarily convinced of that myself, but Jonah was a type of Christ, you see, pointing forwards to a much greater and more significant descent into Sheol.

[3 : 39] Then, on the third day, of course, Jesus rose from the dead. So that on the day of Pentecost, Peter quotes from Psalm 16 and applies it to Jesus. And this is what Peter says, right?

Quoting Psalm 16. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your holy ones see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life.

You will make me full of gladness with your presence. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. And you see how Peter keeps using dualistic language, okay, referring to both Jesus' soul and his body, right, or his person, him, and then his flesh. And that's because Jesus' soul went down to Hades, but God did not abandon him there. And his body, or his flesh, went into the grave, but God did not let it see corruption or decay. [4 : 55] Then on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. Up from the grave, he arose with a mighty triumph. Oh, his foes, he arose, a victor from the dark domain.

It's talking about Sheol, Hades. And now he lives forever with his saints to reign. And what about that line? Well, again, I have learned a lot in recent history. And I think this is what Ephesians chapter 4 is talking about. Remember in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 7 to 10, Paul says that Jesus ascended on high, leading a host of captives in his wake. He's quoting Psalm 68. When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. And then Paul explains the psalm. In saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions? And I think here the footnote is helpful, because what Paul really means is the lower regions of the earth, not just the lower regions, i.e. the earth. [6 : 07] Right? Because Jesus didn't just descend onto the earth's crust, but he descended into Sheol, into the heart of the earth. And then, he who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things.

So what Paul is saying is that now that Jesus has passed through the underworld, the earth, right? He's passed through death, and then he's ridden up on the clouds of heaven. Now he is the Lord of all. He is Lord of everything and everyone everywhere. There is no realm that he hasn't conquered. There is no realm outside of his domain. So that everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth would bow the knee to him. And he led a host of captives, meaning that he delivered Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, all those who had been waiting for him. He delivered them from Sheol and took them to the heaven of heavens with him. Now that is why in, say, the book of Hebrews, when the author of Hebrews sees the church in heaven, he sees the spirits of the righteous made perfect, referring to all the spirits of the people of faith recorded in chapter 11. [7 : 32] Right? You remember the passage, Hebrews chapter 12. He's contrasting the old mountain, Mount Sinai, with the new mountain, Mount Zion. He's saying, just as, once upon a time, it was a real thing, but anyway, just as once God rescued his people out of Egypt and led them to worship him at Mount Sinai, so now God has rescued a new people out of sin and death and even Sheol and brought them to Mount Zion.

So he says, you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

In other words, Jesus is in heaven now, surrounded by the righteous saints of old, in the heavenly city of Jerusalem, in the heavenly church. And I want to stay in the book of Hebrews for a moment because I think that the significance of that is sometimes lost on us, and the book of Hebrews puts it in a really striking way.

So come with me to Hebrews chapter 1. Hebrews chapter 1. I can't remember, but I don't think I've put these on the screen because I want you to come with me. So, listen to how the book of Hebrews in many ways is all about timing.

Right? So when you're interested in the when questions, going to Hebrews is a good place to go. He says, long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

[9 : 27] But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son, today I have begotten you? Or again, I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son. And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, let all God's angels worship him.

All right, now stop there for a moment and let's take verse 6 out of context. Right? Just take it out of context. Nine times out of 10, I reckon, reading verse 6, you might be tempted to think that the author of Hebrews is talking about Jesus' incarnation.

Right? When God brought his firstborn son into the world and all the angels, you know, were there in the field, weren't they? Worshipping him. But actually, if you just keep reading, so skip down to chapter 2, verse 5, it becomes clear that that's not what he's talking about, chapter 2, verse 5, for it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.

[11:04] You see, he has been speaking about the world to come and how God brought his firstborn son into the world to come and then commanded all the angels to worship him.

And then as soon as you realize that and you go back over it, I think it's impossible to miss. So go back to chapter 1, verse 3. After making purification for sins, right, that was on earth, on the cross, then he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high in heaven.

That's in the world to come. Having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. See, that was when he arrived in the world and God's command thundered forth, let all God's angels worship him.

So where is Jesus now? Well, he's up there, isn't he? Above us. And he's also ahead of us in some sense in the future already.

He's in the world, not just above us, but the world to come. Now, if we skip forward a few chapters to chapter 9, we'll see this again in Hebrews chapter 9.

[12:16] The author of Hebrews explains that the tabernacle and the whole sacrificial system was designed to teach us this, to teach us about the cosmos. So in chapter 9 verses 1 to 5, basically he tells us about the layout of the tabernacle.

The two sections, there was, as you will know, the holy place and the most holy place. Do I have a picture of this, Michael? Yeah, you know, you've got the holy place and then the most holy place. Okay, then in verse 6, he says, notice, these preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section performing their ritual duties.

But into the second, that's the most holy place, only the high priest goes and he but once a year and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this, the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing which is symbolic for the present age.

[13:26] Now, the word there is *kairos*. It means a kind of season of time, a period of time. Okay? According to this arrangement, so what he means there is according to the priestly work being done in section one, right, just in the holy place, according to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

Right? That's what the holy place can do. It can do all those kinds of things but it can't fully perfect anyone. That's what things in this age can do.

But you see how the tabernacle therefore represents this age, the two epochs, this age and the one to come. And the way into the age to come, notice he says, cannot be opened as long as the first section is still standing.

That is, as long as the first age hasn't been destroyed, hasn't been shaken. Right? But verse 11, but when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not just the one made with hands, that is, none of this creation, he entered once for all into the holy places, that is, both places, so the holy of holies as well, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

I'll skip down to verse 23 where he says it again. Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

[15 : 19] For Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Right, so Christ has entered into the new world. He has entered into the most holy place, heaven itself. Having died and risen again, he has gone into the very presence of God, carrying, as it were, metaphorically, his own blood.

Right? He entered into the most holy place as our high priest having suffered his own violent death as a sacrifice for our sins. And now, there yet remains one thing for him to do, he will appear a second time.

[16 : 37] Not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. This, of course, is the kind of thing Paul talks about in 1 Thessalonians. In chapter 1, how the Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Or again, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, when Paul describes the parousia and he talks about Jesus coming down from heaven with the saints who have been in heaven with him and raising up their bodies that are still in the grave and those who are still alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air just like you would meet a king or a special dignitary coming into town.

We will meet him in the air, greet him, as he comes to establish his kingdom on earth. Right. Now this is all summarized by the overlap of the ages diagram.

Do you know the one? Now I have tried to make a much more complicated version of this diagram. I'm not sure why I thought it would be easier. Please don't take it too seriously because if you do you may be led astray to all sorts of heresies.

I don't know. It's probably inaccurate in a bunch of different ways but I thought just in case it's helpful I'll use it. Okay. So caveat out of the way. Here goes.

[18 : 01] A short history of the world. In the Old Testament the saints lived and died and went to Sheol. Then Jesus came from heaven to earth and he grew up.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried and he descended to the dead. The Greek word there is Hades. He descended into Sheol.

He went to be with the saints and then when he rose again he led the saints up to heaven with him. Are we keeping up? Maybe.

We'll see. So that now in heaven he is with the spirits of the righteous made perfect. He actually crossed into the new world the new age.

The age of righteousness. The age of the spirit. The age where he is king. But he is still waiting for his enemies all his enemies to be put under his feet. So the old age hasn't ended yet.

[19 : 02] But one day he will return to judge and he will bring the saints with him. He will raise up their dead bodies from the ground so you know I could have added more detail a couple of skeletons in the ground there or something.

But anyway getting too complicated already. But he will raise them up and then he will live with his saints on the new earth forever and ever giving them resurrection bodies so that they can inhabit that new glorious place.

Right? Hovering just above them. No I'm kidding. That's just a flaw in the diagram. He's going to be with us. Okay. But of course we live in the period of the overlap.

So this has two big implications. Right? The timing of all of this has two big implications for us and where we're up to right now. And so we're up to point number two now. And sub point number one. Living in the light of the overlap of the ages. So did you notice back in Hebrews chapter 12 that the really interesting thing is that somehow spiritually speaking the preacher is saying we have already come to this gathering in heaven.

[20 : 19] Right? The Bible talks about this all the time. In fact in many ways this is the ethic of the New Testament. Right? The reason Christians should think like we think and live like we live is

because we already live in heaven.

You, your true self is truly there. in the new world with Jesus and with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all those people of faith. Right? They are already there consciously but we though we cannot see this reality with our physical eyes we by faith are supposed to see that we are already there with them in spirit.

As Paul puts it in the book of Ephesians you have been made alive and are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. Or in Colossians since you have died with Christ and your life is hidden with Christ in God set your mind on things above not on earthly things.

Right? Set your mind on things above where you are. 2 Corinthians if anyone is in Christ new creation and he means that's it that's the new creation right there you can see it a person that has been renewed because they are somehow participating in the renewal of all things that God promised would come at the end of the ages.

And of course Peter says you have been born again through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Alright? So the New Testament keeps banging on about this idea that because we are in union with Christ by the Holy Spirit he is our head we are his body somehow we are already connected to this spiritual realm.

[22 : 09] We are already up there in heaven. You are somehow already new yourself and already in the new world. And this is why you should act in a new way.

This is why you should change the way you think and speak and act. Don't think like an earthling. Don't just talk like everybody else. Don't do what unbelievers do.

The book of Philippians is one of my favourite books in this regard because Paul has a great illustration. He knows that the citizens of Philippi thought of themselves as a little outpost of Rome. The citizens of Philippi were Roman citizens who happened to be located in the middle of Greece. but they knew that they were truly Roman citizens living on Roman soil. Philippi was considered Roman territory even though it's in the middle of Macedonia.

And so the Philippians followed Roman customs and Roman fashions and swore their allegiance to Rome and the king of Rome. The church is to be just like that. A little outpost of heaven on earth.

[23 : 18] We are not merely citizens of earth looking forward one day to belonging to heaven. No, we are already citizens of heaven. So right now we must follow heavenly customs.

We must wear heavenly clothing like righteousness instead of the filthy rags of our old sins. We must swear allegiance to the king of heaven and so on. Just like if you were to move across the world to another nation or another kingdom you would have to start adopting new ways of doing things.

You know, driving on the right hand side of the road or whatever it is. Now we live in another place. So we have to act accordingly. Now one of the ways I hear people getting this wrong I think is when people talk about building the kingdom here.

Even I mean there are some crazy ways people talk about that but and this isn't necessarily one of the crazy ones but I think even building the kingdom by doing evangelism is not really the way the New Testament talks about it.

We are not building the kingdom. The kingdom is up there. It's built. It's a place. The kingdom is in heaven. It's paradise. Right? Just like you might imagine a nation far, far away you know like like Rome or you know I think of France although it's not a very good illustration because they're so secularist.

[24 : 46] But anyway Jesus said my kingdom is not of this world. The kingdom is miles away. We can't build it here. But what we can do what we are doing is going around proclaiming the kingdom.

Proclaiming the kingdom. Right? We are teaching people about the reality of this far away kingdom that despite appearances maybe there is a new king in heaven and that they can belong to that kingdom and that one day that kingdom will fill the whole earth.

One day that kingdom will be here. Jesus will build it. We can pray for that kingdom to be here so your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Right? On earth as it currently is in heaven. And we know that our prayers will be answered. Right? I love the way it's described in Revelation chapter 11 verse 15. Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven saying the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.

You see we are not building the kingdom right now in this world even as we are calling people to belong to it. And similarly still on this point about the present implications of the overlap of the ages one very important thing to know brothers and sisters is that when we die we no longer go to Sheol or to Hades.

[26 : 19] Right? Because Jesus has conquered Hades and delivered his people from there. So we will go to be with him in heaven. In Revelation chapter 1 Jesus describes himself this way he says fear not I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades because he invaded death and Hades you see and now he has the keys.

So Jesus is the one who consigns people to Hades right? He's the one who keeps people locked in there and Jesus is the one who frees people from Hades or doesn't allow us to go there in the first place.

So that when Paul dies he is looking forward immediately to going straight to heaven to be with Jesus. So in Philippians chapter 1 he says for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain if I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labor for me yet which I shall choose I cannot tell I am hard pressed between the two my desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

So brothers and sisters that is what happens to all Christians when we die. We go immediately to be with Christ. Our bodies go into the ground but our souls don't go to Hades anymore and not even the first class lounge part of Hades as some have described it.

Our souls immediately go to be with Christ in the highest heaven in the ultimate and true paradise above in the new world. Okay but then what happens after the judgment day?

[28 : 11] After the Lord Jesus returns and the old age is fully and finally done away with then what will heaven and hell be like? And I know that in a sense this is probably what I should have been talking about the whole time but we just have a little bit of time for it and I want to make four points.

Four points. The first two are about heaven and the second two are about hell. Number one heaven on earth. So the big difference at the end of the book of Revelation between the old cosmos and the new cosmos is that the boundaries between heaven and earth seem to blur or maybe even merge. They become one place. So that's what our reading in Revelation 21 was about. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.

[29 : 22] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning Nor crying! nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said behold I am making all things new.

Now the image of a city I think is a brilliant one because it denotes both a people and a place. The city of Brisbane is not just a place, is it? If there weren't any people here it wouldn't be a city.

But of course it's not just a bunch of people either, it's these people all gathered together into one place, not scattered. In other words the city is a picture of the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God.

God's people who have been living in heaven, God's place, under God's rule. But now God's kingdom is coming to earth. Another crucial feature of this city as John tells us in verse 16 is that its length and width and height are all equal.

In other words it's a perfect cube. And the only thing in the scriptures that is a perfect cube is the holy of holies in the tabernacle or in the temple. The most holy place.

[30 : 37] Which as we've already discussed was symbolic of the world to come. Heaven. In other words I don't think we are literally supposed to imagine this city jutting out the side of the earth or something like that.

And I could be wrong about that but I don't think that's what we're being told. A sort of massive city unbalancing the planet. But I think instead the city and the new creation are two ways of describing the same reality.

The whole of the new creation is going to be a city. That is a place for God's people to live under his rule. So again some commentators talk about how we will come and go from the city.

The city is at the heart of the new creation and we will come and go from it. I think that misses the point. I don't think that's right. Rather every moment of eternity we're going to be living in the holy of holies.

But not just the small room plated with gold like the earthly copy was. It's going to be like the TARDIS or something. Inside this room is a whole universe.

[31 : 49] And notice it's going to be this universe. In the sense that God is going to make all things new not all new things.

This lines up with what Paul says in Romans chapter 8 that God is going to liberate creation from its bondage to decay. And 2 Peter chapter 3 where Peter says that when God destroys and remakes the universe in a fiery inferno it's going to be like the flood.

Only far more catastrophic. But it's going to be like the flood. The flood was a type of the future judgment. It's not as if when God destroyed the earth in Noah's day that the earth disappeared and then was replaced by a different earth.

No it's just this earth was cleansed. It was purged. Human civilization was wiped out so that only the righteous or not so righteous but anyway the righteous survived.

It was a type of what is to come. The heavens and earth are going to be purged. Human civilization is going to be wiped out. The cosmos is going to collapse. The heavenly bodies are going to burn.

[33 : 03] But coming out the other side it will still be this creation radically transformed and renewed. and we will be given our new bodies as well just like Jesus fit for this new imperishable kingdom.

Point number two heaven isn't for everyone contra universalism. So the second point I want to make is that heaven isn't for everyone. I'm sure we all know what universalism is.

There are different versions of it but essentially it's the idea that sooner or later everyone will end up in heaven. This is pure heresy.

As attractive as we all find the idea I'm sure it directly contradicts numerous passages in the scriptures which are abundantly clear including for instance verses 7 and 8.

Revelation 21 verse 7 and 8. The one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly the faithless the detestable as for murderers the sexually immoral sorcerers idolaters and all liars their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur which is the second death.

[34 : 24] You really could not get a clearer statement than that one. There are two ways to live and two eternal destinations suitably prepared for those who travel along them.

the kingdom of God has never been and never will be a universal reality in the sense that all people everywhere will honour and enjoy God's chosen king as their own.

Remember how Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 10 and 11 or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

They won't. Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

It's just the same kind of list we read about in Revelation 21 isn't it? These people will be excluded from the kingdom of God. Jesus talked about shutting the door to the heavenly banquet even when people are banging on the door saying Lord, Lord, let us in.

[35 : 40] Depart from me you workers of iniquity I never knew you. Or in Luke chapter 14 when one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things he said to him bless there's everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

But he said to him a man once gave a great banquet and invited many and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited come for everything is now ready but they all alike began to make excuses the first said to him I have bought a field and I must go out and see it please have me excused and another said I bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them please have me excused and another said I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come so the servant came and reported these things to his master then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame and the servant said sir what you commanded has been done and

still there is room and the master said to the servant go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled for I tell you none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet do you see the punchline heaven is not for everybody they will never taste the banquet now as I say there are a variety of heretical teachings out there suggesting all sorts of reasons and mechanisms by which people will ultimately get into heaven some of them are masquerading as evangelical do not be deceived the righteous will not inherit the kingdom of God not everyone who wears an Arsenal shirt actually plays for the club I have a New South Wales blues shirt at home that was a gift from a friend when I came up here who wanted to get me in trouble I don't even go for the team I hate most of the slogans on the shirt you can't just slap evangelical on the front of everything and make it smell nice on the front of heresy and turn it into orthodoxy so thirdly the horrors there is one word that we haven't brought up so far and that is the word Gehenna it occurs 12 times in the New Testament 11 times on the lips of Jesus and once in the book of James Jesus his brother Gehenna is a Hebrew word that literally refers to the valley of Hinnom which is a valley that runs along the south side or southwest side of Jerusalem in the Old Testament the valley of Hinnom was a place where the people of Israel set up idols particularly to Molech and they sacrificed their children to Molech by burning them alive just as an aside if you have heard that Gehenna was also used as a rubbish dump during the time of Jesus there is no evidence of that my understanding is that that is a myth so anyway it's the Old Testament that is the relevant context here because Gehenna was such an evil place the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 7 talked about how one day instead of being called the valley of Hinnom the valley would be called the valley of slaughter and Jeremiah has some really revolting descriptions of how birds will pick at the dead bodies in the valley and so on it's actually the same passage where at the beginning the people are hiding in the temple in Jerusalem saying the temple of the Lord the temple of the Lord the temple of the Lord they're treating it like a den of robbers they think that they can go out and commit outrageous atrocities and then get away with it when they come back and hide in the temple but

God says one day he's going to come and drive them out of the temple and kill them and chuck them in the valley of Hinnom we get a very similar description in the book of Isaiah at the end of the book of Isaiah when the new Jerusalem has been established and we read about the new heavens and earth Isaiah writes for as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me says the Lord so shall your offspring and notice how the language of all flesh here again doesn't mean that literally every single human being will come into the new heavens and new earth to worship the Lord now that is a reference to people coming from every tribe and tongue and nation but outside the city outside this idyllic paradise there will be dead bodies being eaten by worms and suffering unquenchable fire and the righteous will come out to inspect them now

[40 : 57] Jesus picks up on these images in the new testament when he talks about Gehenna for instance in Mark chapter 9 he says if your hand causes you to sin cut it off it is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to hell to the again the word is Gehenna or again in Matthew 10 he says do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna so just like heaven actually one of the things to realize about hell is that it will be bodily or just like the new creation just like

God's people will need resurrection bodies fit for their imperishable kingdom God's enemies will be granted their bodies fit for their suffering in hell Jesus comments on this in the book of John do not marvel at this for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment in other words everyone is going to be resurrected human beings are souls and bodies we have committed sins in both our souls and our bodies our souls need to be punished our bodies need to be punished that's what God's justice demands and the New Testament plainly says this and I think just by the way that this is probably the key difference to get between!

Hades 2.0 just as there was a first heaven and a first earth and there is going to be a new kind of underworld a new kind of place of punishment in Revelation chapter 20 just before the passage we read John says that death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire this is the second death the lake of fire and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life he was thrown into the lake of fire in other words death and Hades are not the same place as Gehenna exactly but I think they're related you've got the first death and the second death you've got Hades the realm of the

dead and Gehenna the new realm of the dead and

I think the key difference is that Hades is a place of disembodied suffering it's a spiritual dimension a place for souls but Gehenna is a place of physical suffering for both souls and bodies as Jesus says and lastly while Hades is temporary hell or Gehenna or the lake of fire is forever contra annihilationism so annihilationism is another heresy again with a variety of forms but essentially it's the idea that at some point the people suffering in hell will simply cease to exist and I hope you understand that I'm not trying to bandy that word heresy around lightly and it's not that all errors of doctrine or exegesis constitute heresy and furthermore just to clarify something I don't think that people who believe in annihilationism are so outrageously heretical that we should shun them and that they won't be saved themselves or anything like that but

I think we should still use the how serious this error is because it cuts to the very heart of the gospel now we obviously don't have time for a full rebuttal now but one of the things I have just wanted to show you by trying to do a journey through the whole of the scriptures rather than just the end here is that death in the Bible has never meant the end of human existence every time you the end of existence we think of death like that because we are secularists right because we are atheistic in our thinking and we can only imagine a person as a person when they have a body and when they go into the ground the person is over the person is not over in the Bible killing someone or destroying them has always meant ruining them it meant moving them from this world into the underworld into a place of torment like the rich man it meant humbling them there is no suggestion in the

[46 : 19] New Testament that the people suffering in hell will ever be extinguished and I want to finish with the most shocking thing that I think you should all think about if anything what Jesus says about the rich man and Lazarus suggests that we may well see each other in our respective locations from heaven we will see hell and from hell they will see heaven I see no reason at least why we ought not to be aware of each other again at the end of Isaiah the people of the New Jerusalem come out and look upon the dead bodies Augustine talks about how this may be in their minds it may be that we are just in our minds as it were going out but I think then the whole idea of Gehenna is that it is a valley just outside

Jerusalem overlooked by the inhabitants up on Zion preaching on this theme Jonathan Edwards the great American preacher of the 18th century delivered a sermon entitled the end of the wicked contemplated by the righteous and it is a terrible and moving sermon and I mean that as a compliment it is terrible in that it is full of terror as any sermon on hell ought to be so I want to end by quoting a passage from it and I really don't want you to write Jonathan Edwards off as if he was just a bit of a fire and brimstone fanatic because that's rubbish he was actually just a really courageous and Christlike man in his preaching and I could have quoted any number of different theologians and pastors down the ages who have articulated this teaching!

Augustine Aquinas Tertullian because he is so clear and eloquent in his description Edwards is teaching us what the Bible teaches us not that we will be blissfully ignorant of hell but that we will be blissfully aware of it so here goes Edwards says it will be an occasion of their rejoicing as the glory of God will appear in it the glory of God appears in all his works and therefore there is no work of God which the saints in glory shall behold and contemplate but what will be an occasion of rejoicing to them God glorifies himself in the eternal damnation of the ungodly men God glorifies himself in all that he doth but he glorifies himself principally in his eternal disposal of his intelligent creatures some are appointed to everlasting life and others left to everlasting death the saints in heaven will be perfect in their love to

God their hearts will be all a flame of love to God and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God and will exceedingly delight in seeing him glorified the saints highly value the glory of God here in this but how much more will they so do in the world to come they will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory the glory of God will in their esteem be of greater consequence than the welfare of thousands and millions of souls let me pray glory glorious father God please keep your glory front and center in our thinking so that we might understand and see heaven and hell for what they are and loving father please impress them upon our hearts so we might act in this day of salvation in this day of mercy before it is too late before the great chasm is fixed forever and ever we pray father in your mercy you would save our friends and family our colleagues our neighbors people we run into in the street help us to be mission minded and not afraid with these things filling our hearts and our heads so that we are useful and urgent in this day for their salvation we pray all

these things in
Jesus name amen holy