

Hell Yes or Hell No #1

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] Pretty much across the board, if you were to take a public opinion poll probably a hundred years ago or maybe even 50 years ago and ask how many people believe that there is a literal heaven and a literal hell, you would have gotten considerably higher numbers than what you would get if you were to take a similar poll today.

What is happening? Well, of course, heaven has always been a whole lot more popular and a lot more desirable. Virtually everybody thinks that there is a life hereafter probably and that heaven most certainly exists if there is.

But hell they are not so sure about. Now there was a time, as I've said, when we were a lot more sure of it as a culture than what we are today. To what do we attribute the difference?

How is it that the conviction that there is a place called hell, how is it that that has changed so much over the years?

And I have a theory that I would just like to throw out to you. I can't say that it's based on anything other than just my observation. But I have gotten the impression, and I've seen this in my own lifetime, where we have become so overly impressed with our knowledge today that we are eager to discount anything that we do not feel measures up to our level of sophistication and intellectual acumen.

[1 : 3 8] There are those who look back on a public opinion poll of a hundred years ago, or even what the Bible says, and say, well, it's true that back then people believed the Bible.

They took it seriously. They believed that there was a heaven and a hell and all of the rest of it. And they believed a whole lot of things like that. But you see, that's only because back then people didn't really know any better.

But today we are so much more enlightened than they were, and we have been able to accomplish great things in our culture, in our standard of living, and in our technology and all the rest.

And we simply don't need those old-fashioned ideas. In other words, we have outgrown, as a humanity and as a culture, we have outgrown the old Bible content and the fear of hell and all of the rest of it.

We have just simply progressed beyond that. People who lived back then, they believed that, but that was okay for them. They just didn't know any better.

[2 : 5 9] But today we do. So we discount those things. And when you consider the best-selling books on atheism that I mentioned in a couple of messages ago, God is Not Great, and The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins and others, and they make the best-sellers list, they poke fun at things like hell and call it just one more ignorant superstition that unenlightened people endorse.

And, of course, they make great sport of Christians and evangelicals who believe in those things. So, at the outset, let me tell you this.

We have only one actual impeccable authority for what we believe regarding heaven and hell, and however much stock we choose to put in those who say they have visited either place and come back to tell us what it is like.

We cannot accord those the same kind of authority that we do the word of God. Scripture is our only and final authority, so we have to appeal to it for what we know about heaven and hell.

And I would be the first to admit, we have far more questions about these realities than we have answers. And the more I study the subjects of heaven and hell, the more questions I have.

[4 : 38] And I just don't have the answers that I would like. I have great curiosities regarding both of them, and I'm sure that you do as well. So, in continuing our consideration of the afterlife, I want to remind you that we are operating under two presuppositions, with which we are already working.

And the first, to repeat, is there is a creator God, Genesis 1.1, because if there is no God, there certainly can be no heaven and no hell, because if there is no God, there's no way that they could have come into existence.

And secondly, the presupposition that there is an inanimate part to our human personhood, in that we are not merely our physical body.

The real intangible being inside our physical body does not die with the body. In fact, it does not die.

It is not subject to death. So, we will consider the afterlife from two different aspects. And the first is the intermediate state.

[5 : 55] That is, what is that state of being between this life that we now experience and eternity, which we will ultimately experience?

That's called the intermediate life. And the eternal state is that state in which individuals will be fixed for and throughout eternity.

And let me remind you again, eternity is not a massive accumulation of time. Eternity is timeless.

No calendars, no clocks, no passing of time, no sensation of time, which, of course, is something that we just simply cannot comprehend, because we are all creatures who are confined to space and time.

And we cannot imagine existing without either of those. But the time is coming. No pun intended. The time is coming when there will be no time.

[7 : 09] And that will be the eternal state. So, the intermediate state is the disposition of our personhood, consisting of body and spirit, after physical death.

The intermediate state for believers is heaven without the body, depending on your interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5 and the first couple of verses.

And we pointed out some of the difficulty of that to you. And the intermediate state of unbelievers is Hades without the body.

The eternal state of believers is heaven with a glorified body. The eternal state of unbelievers is hell with the body.

So, have you got that? Okay, I will. The intermediate state for believers is heaven without the body.

[8 : 16] The intermediate state of unbelievers is Hades without the body. The eternal state of believers is heaven with a glorified body.

The eternal state of unbelievers is hell, not Hades, but hell with the body.

So, we need to begin by defining some terms. And let me just throw these out for your consideration. These are, first of all, limited to the Old Testament.

And it is a word that is translated in our English versions in the Old Testament as hell. H-E-L-L.

And it is found in the King James 31 times. Rendered by the English hell. H-E-L-L.

[9 : 24] Sometimes, three to be exact, it is rendered as the pit. Or the pit is the English expression for it.

But the word in the Hebrew is Sheol. S-H-E-O-L.

So, I say that to say this. The actual word hell is not mentioned in the Hebrew Old Testament original language at all.

It comes across as Sheol. It is translated by English translators from Sheol to hell.

Probably, we would have been better served if they would have just transliterated it and brought it over and written it in the English as S-H-E-O-L.

[10 : 22] Sheol. Because it does not mean hell insofar as a permanent state is concerned. It means the pit or sometimes rendered the grave.

It is a synonym for the grave or for death. It is also a place or state to which all go at death.

And it's an interesting thing in that in the Old Testament, you never get the impression like you do in the New Testament that when one died, he went to heaven.

That was never the Hebrew Old Testament concept. And it isn't the concept of Jews today. Because Jews today, of course, do not accept our New Testament as divine revelation.

They believe that the Old Testament is the only thing that is inspired of God. And for the Jewish people, even to this day, the Old Testament alone constitutes their whole Bible, since they give no credence to the New Testament.

[11 : 29] So the Jew, I'm talking about all the way from Adam to Nehemiah to Daniel to Isaiah, none of those people ever thought in terms of dying and their spirit or soul going to heaven as we do.

That is a New Testament concept. We view absent from the body and present with the Lord. Where is the Lord? Well, he's in heaven. If you're going to be present with him, then you're going to heaven.

If you are a believer, that is your destiny. But that was not an Old Testament concept. Their concept was gravedom or the place of the dead.

They believed that there was a depository for departed spirits once you died. But it was not heaven. They also believed, and I realize this is going to muddy the water somewhat, but I just have to throw it in there for the sake of accuracy.

They did believe very emphatically in the resurrection of the body. That's an Old Testament reality as well as a new. And Job referred to that by saying, though worms destroy this flesh.

[12 : 50] He was simply dealing with the reality of what happens to the physical body when it's buried in the ground. Though worms destroy this flesh, yet in my flesh I will see God.

That is a direct affirmation that he expected this decomposed, deteriorated body to be somehow renewed and resurrected.

And with it, he would view the living God. And Daniel talks about being raised to newness of life and some to everlasting shame and contempt, which of course would be the opposite.

And then those who will be resurrected in glory. And the psalmist, of course, speaks of it in a number of places as well.

Now, I must hurry along because I have a great deal of material I want to try to get through as much as possible in one setting. The word Hades comes into play.

[13 : 52] And if you were going to spell it, it would be H-A-D-E-S. And it's pronounced Hades. It first surfaces in the Greek Septuagint.

And the Greek Septuagint was created about 250 years before Christ was born.

And the rationale for it was that as a result of the dispersion, that is the scattering of the Jews all over the Mediterranean world, as a result of the dispersion and as a result of the great proliferation of the Greek language, you had a great many dispersed Jews who could no longer speak Hebrew because they were not born in Israel, but were second and third and fourth generation Hebrews from Israel, planted in foreign lands all throughout the Mediterranean where the common language was Greek.

Thanks to Alexander the Great, he diffused the Greek language all throughout the Mediterranean world, and it became the lingua franca, just as we could almost say English is today.

You can go almost anywhere in the world and find English spoken. But in this day, it was Greek that was the international language.

[15 : 26] If anybody, if anybody back in this time could speak two languages, almost always you would find one of them to be Greek.

So the Septuagint was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which the Jews then for the most part couldn't read, into the Greek language, which they could read.

So they could have the Hebrew scriptures in the language that they could read. That's the basis for the Greek Septuagint. The Hebrew Old Testament translates the word Sheol as Hades in the Greek.

That is how it is carried over. Now when we come to the New Testament, the word Hades is used ten times in the New Testament, and it is always translated in the English as hell.

H-E-L-L. Shouldn't be, but it is. And the word Gehenna is used twelve times in the New Testament, and they are all translated as hell.

[16 : 53] But it shouldn't be. It should be Gehenna. And then there is another that is referred to as Tartarus. It is found in Jude, I think.

It's only one time. And it is the abode of angels, or the pit, or if you will, it is a kind of hell that is designed for angelic beings.

So, interestingly enough, eleven of the twelve times that Gehenna is used, which, by the way, is a more apt description of hell than is Hades, eleven of the twelve times that Gehenna is used, it is used by Christ himself.

And I want to take you through those, because they're all grouped close together, and it will be convenient to look at them. So, let's look at the first one, please. In Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5, we will be in Matthew and in Luke for a few, and then we will end up with our text in Luke, chapter 16.

Matthew, chapter 5, and verse 29. Christ is speaking, and he says here, this is in the Sermon on the Mount, If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you, for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

[18 : 30] And the word here is Gehenna, and some are surprised that Jesus would be speaking this way. After all, we have attributed a certain gentility, and a certain kindness, and a certain softness, and a certain sweetness to the person of Jesus.

It just doesn't seem to fit the mold here for him to be speaking like this. But it is a very solemn thing that he's saying. And no, I'm quite confident he doesn't intend people to go around plucking their eyes out, literally.

But he is using hyperbole to describe the severity and the seriousness with which we should deal with a besetting sin. Because a sin, a besetting sin in one's life that is not controlled or conquered can be devastating, even eternally.

And the word that is used here is Gehenna. Now, the actual origin of this term comes from a region just outside the city walls of Jerusalem that was referred to as Gehenna.

Gehenna. And it was literally the town dump. All of the refuse, all of the trash was dispensed there.

[20 : 03] It was simply thrown over the wall into a deep ravine below. That was the landfill, the city dump.

It was always burning. There were always things being added to it. There was always smoke and stench being emitted from it.

It was a very unpleasant sight. If you've ever had occasion to visit a landfill or a dump where objects have been burning, you know that it has a peculiar, terrible odor to it.

And by the way, one of the things that would add to this is that very frequently, animal and human bodies were thrown in as well.

These were bodies that were never claimed for burial by the next of kin. They would likely be the bodies of criminals. I have no doubt that the two thieves who were crucified with Christ ended up in Gehenna, the town dump.

[21 : 14] They just threw these over and let them rot and decay. And of course, animals fed upon them. It was a terribly grotesque, very ugly, disconcerting kind of thing.

It was the ultimate place to avoid. And yet, it is mentioned 12 times in the New Testament.

In Matthew chapter 10 and verse 28, let's look at that for a moment. And it is Christ who is speaking again.

Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

And that word destroy has misled a number of people because it allows the doctrine of annihilation to be fostered. And this is a popular view today.

[22 : 16] It is embraced even by some evangelicals or some who call themselves evangelicals. And annihilationism is the response that some have to the idea of, but isn't God a loving God?

Yes, he is a loving God. And their response is, I do not believe that a loving God could provide for perpetual, unending, eternal punishment or hell for anybody.

That is not my idea of a God of love. Well, it is not my idea of a God of love either. If love is all that he is about, then I would tend to buy into that.

But we have got a big problem with that. God is a God of love. But he is a God of absolute holiness and absolute justice.

And when you marry those terms with love, you have a different concept, or you should have. God is holy.

[23 : 33] What does that mean? It means he is absolutely absent from, untainted by, any kind of defilement, whatever.

God's standard is absolute holiness. This is why you have no chance, whatever, of heaven, if you are not in Christ.

Because in Christ, you have his, not yours. You have his holiness. That's what makes you accepted in the beloved.

You are robed in the righteousness of Christ. If you are in your own righteousness, you're sunk. I don't care if you're Mother Teresa, or Billy Graham, or whomever you are.

You don't have a prayer. Because you are far removed from absolute holiness. That's what God is. That's what we have to contend with. That's the reality of there being a hell.

[24 : 40] Is because this absolute holiness cannot be defiled with sin. So you've got to couple the holiness of God with the love of God.

And for those who say, well, where is the love of God? Where is the love of God? If there is a, the love of God was manifested on the cross. That's the great expression of God's love that was commended.

And that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God has revealed his love. He has poured out his love in the death of his son. And if we are going to eliminate hell because we do not like to think that a loving God could allow anyone to go to hell.

Then we automatically demean and depreciate the work that Christ accomplished on that cross. That was motivated by God's love and God's mercy.

You cannot pick and choose or isolate the attributes of God. Dwell on them and look only for an outcome that comes from that particular attribute.

[25 : 50] You've got to take all that makes God God and keep them together. And when you do, you will see that his holiness and his righteousness and his justice looms just as large as does his love.

They are all together. And it is hell that gives real meaning and value to heaven. And it is heaven that gives real meaning and value to hell.

It is light that gives value and meaning to darkness. It is cold that gives value and meaning to heat. All of these things are opposites.

And one is defined by the other. And they go together. In Matthew chapter 18 and verse 9. Well, we've already considered that.

Let's look at 23. I'm sorry. 23. Matthew 23 and 33. You serpents.

[27 : 05] Listen, here he's talking to the scribes and Pharisees in verse 29 and in verse 33. He says, You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?

And this again is Gehenna. And that is a place of future punishment. And it is repeated in a similar reference in Mark chapter 9 and verse 43.

Let's go there quickly and then we'll repair to our Luke passage. Mark 9. 43.

He's talking about the stumbling again. But I want you to notice, Abe refers to it as having unquenchable fire where their worm does not die.

I really don't know what that means. I've consulted several scholars and all I found was massive disagreements. But I can tell you this much for certain.

[28 : 10] It is not a good thing. It is not a good thing. Their worm does not die. And the fire is not quenched.

Those who see the fire being quenched or this eternal state being terminated are our current bumper crop of annihilationists.

And they are people who believe that, yes, it is true. Believers go to heaven. Unbelievers go to hell. But when they get there, they are punished for their sin only temporarily.

And then they are consumed. Just burned up. So that they are no more. They have no more consciousness. They have no more body.

They have no more spirit. They have no more existence in any form. They just cease to exist. No memory. No recollection.

[29 : 11] No nothing. They are just poof. Gone. Completely. That's the annihilationist position. And I suspect, based on what these references say, in the gospels that we have already considered.

And the rich man in Luke chapter 16, if you will turn to that, please, they would much prefer that. But I do not have any scriptural basis for saying that it's going to be that way.

The passage that we have here is frequently referred to as a parable. And it may be. But even if it is a parable, what is it teaching?

Parables have a point. A parable is given by our Lord as an illustration. And he is making a point with it. He is teaching a truth.

Someone has said that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And there are spiritual implications here. It is a remarkable passage beginning in verse 19.

[30 : 24] A couple of things I'd like to clarify. That this rich man, you must understand, this rich man was not in Hades because he was rich. There are many instances of godly rich men in the Bible.

So it had nothing to do with his wealth that he was in Hades. I know there are probably a lot of people who live on the poverty level who think that all rich people deserve to go to hell simply because they themselves have nothing.

But there are godly rich people and there are godly poor people. But godliness is not determined by one's wealth or lack thereof. So this man, commonly referred to as divies or tradition and Lazarus.

And by the way, this Lazarus is not to in any way be confused with the one that Jesus brings back from the dead. In John chapter 11, Lazarus was a rather common name in Israel.

And there were probably a lot of people named Lazarus. And if this is a parable, of which Jesus gave, I believe, 33 that are recorded in the Gospels, if this is a parable, it is the only parable out of all of the parables where a personal name is ever used.

[31 : 43] Like the name Lazarus. And all of the others, it's a certain widow or a certain man or a certain something, but a name is never used. So if this is a parable, then our Lord broke his customary methodology by using a personal name.

I honestly do not know whether it is a parable or not. It is sandwiched in with parables. It has the ring of a parable.

And it may well be a parable. Someone says, well, what's the difference? Well, the difference is between our Lord recounting an actual literal story of something that really happened in time-space history, or whether he just made it up on the spot for the sake of illustrating his point.

Because that's what he did with most parables. A certain man went out to sow seed, and he sowed some seed, and so on. All of this was made up. But the point is, even if this is made up and was not an actual story, it is still revealing a truth.

What is the truth? It is not good. That's the whole point. It is a warning. So, take your pick. Either way, whether it is a parable, a made-up story, or whether he is recounting something that actually happened, I believe it's teaching the same thing nonetheless.

[33 : 18] So, let us read it. This rich man, habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day, and a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which are falling from the rich man's table.

Besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. It came about that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom.

The rich man also died and was buried. And again, I have to insert something here. This goes back many, many years ago. In fact, this is the way this would have been interpreted by the poor, perhaps, during the slave times here in the United States.

And it was looked upon by many of the people that if you suffered misery, poverty, heartache here, don't worry about it.

Because when you die, it's all going to get reversed. And you're going to get in on all of the good things that you missed out on while you were deprived here on earth.

[34 : 28] And if you, like this rich man, lived and fared sumptuously, dressed in fine purple, ate at the finest restaurants, lived in the finest estate, and all the rest, you've got reason to be concerned when you die, because, brother, your situation is going to be reversed too.

Because you're going to be reduced to the poverty level. So, what goes around comes around. And it's tit for tat. And if you lived well here, you're going to live poorly there. And if you live poorly here, you're going to live well there.

That might sound a little bit reasonable, but it is completely wrong. Completely wrong. The deciding factor is not your financial state or your health state.

The factor that matters is your relationship to Jesus Christ or lack thereof. Money or the lack of it has nothing whatever to do with it.

It almost makes it sound like that in the parable. That's because people misunderstand it. So, it is not one's financial position or one's social position. If you had a lot here, you're not going to have anything there.

[35 : 45] And if you have absolutely nothing here, well, you're going to have a mansion there. No. No. No. If you are related to Christ here, you will have heaven and all that it affords there.

If you do not have a relationship to Christ here, no matter how much money you have or don't have, your estate in the future is going to be severely lacking.

Longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table, besides even the dogs were coming and licking his sores, came about, poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom.

And the rich man also died and was buried. I don't know this business about the angels. Maybe that's standard operating procedure.

Or maybe it was just in this particular case these angels were dispatched. I don't know. I don't know. But Abraham's bosom is referred to as a synonym for paradise.

[36 : 57] The reason it is referred to Abraham's bosom is because who is Abraham? He's the father of Israel. He's the father of the faithful. He is our father Abraham.

And is there a safer, cozier, more desirable place for a Jew to be, and this was all Jewish oriented, than in the bosom of our father Abraham.

The place of ultimate peace and security and safety and enjoyment and tranquility and all of the pluses that go with it.

That's Abraham's bosom. It is likened, and I make it synonymous with paradise. When Jesus told the thief on the cross today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.

Abraham's bosom. The ultimate place for Jewish people in the Old Testament time. And you've got to remember, Christ was speaking these words in an Old Testament economy, not the new.

[38 : 15] He is living and functioning under the Old Testament, under the Mosaic law. He had not yet made a way of access available for people to be absent from the body, present with the Lord.

That does not happen until after his death, burial, and resurrection. This, of course, is before. So he cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.

I do not understand this. The reason I do not understand it is because this man is not in Hades bodily.

Where is his body? His body is in the grave. Where is he? His spirit. His spirit is in Hades.

His spirit. His spirit. And so is the spirit of Lazarus. They are disembodied in this place. They are not there in their body. They are there out of their body.

[39 : 35] When you are out of your body, Do you have a tongue? Is the spirit able to feel heat?

Fire? Pain? Our physical body, the surface of our skin, which is the largest organ of our body, has, I don't know how many, nerve sensors all over it, from the top of your head to the sole of your feet.

You are endowed with nerve sensors that feel cold and heat and a whole host of other stimuli. But if you don't have a body, how does the immaterial part feel those things?

And are these flames physical? I am in agony in this flame. I don't understand that. All I can suggest is God has unlimited ability in providing the wherewithal for a human spirit to feel pain, for a flame to exist that is different from any flames that we know anything about.

We are talking about a completely foreign kind of element here, both for the subjects who are in it and the surroundings to which they are exposed. I just must confess my ignorance about this and a few other things as well.

[41 : 21] Abraham said, Child, remember that during your life you received good things, likewise Lazarus bad things. Now he is being comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you, there is a great chasm fixed.

Great gulf separating these two. And no one is able to cross from either to the other. Well, it isn't likely that anyone would want to from the paradise section to the other section, but they certainly would where the rich man was.

They would want to get out of there if they could and cross over. Christ said, it's impossible. Cannot be done. The great chasm is fixed. Now, as best as I understand this, and I'll be the first to confess, I've got more questions about this than I have answers.

I do get the impression that all of this is before the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This has to do with the disposition of the departed prior to the time that Christ rose from the dead.

So, we're talking about Old Testament conditions. And there appears to be a dual compartment in this place. And by the way, we don't know exactly where it is, but in the Old Testament, Sheol is always referred to as down.

[42 : 53] It would seem to be somewhere in the bowels of the earth. There was a story that was circulating some years ago about a huge hole that had been bore somewhere in the earth.

I think it was in Siberia. And it went down X number of miles. And they lowered sensitive microphones down there. And lo and behold, they picked up on those microphones sounds of horror and screaming and moaning and groaning and all of the rest of it.

And it was sensationalized and put throughout the world. I imagine this is the kind of baloney that you find on the net and people swear to it and make up this stuff.

And apparently somebody did some serious research into it and found that the whole thing was just a gigantic hoax and there was no truth to it at all. But stories like that die hard and they still circulate.

So if you ever hear a story about sensitive microphones picking up people screaming in hell and they heard them in Russia just walk away from it.

[44 : 11] Okay? There's no validity to it at all. We have no idea exactly where this is. We have no idea exactly how it's constructed or what it would be like to be there and you certainly don't want to.

But at any rate, interestingly enough, this man has developed some missionary zeal while he's there.

Can you imagine that he is concerned for his five brothers who are still alive and he doesn't want them to come there? I think that's kind of big of him, really, to be concerned about somebody else when he's suffering this kind of torment.

But we're told that if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rose from the dead. So, this is the picture that is given of the subject of Hades and I am under the impression, and again, I have to apologize because I have dropout spots and blanks that I cannot fill in about some of these things, but I am of the opinion that these who were in Hades, not Abraham's bosom, but in this difficult part, in this agonizing part, are still there.

And that when someone dies today who is not a believer, this is where they go. They do not go to hell, they go to Hades, and this is the place that is described in Luke 16.

[46 : 06] I say that for lack of a better answer. And Abraham's bosom is where believers who died went, only they were comforted.

And when David the psalmist had to bury his son, his newborn son that was born of the illicit relationship that he had with Bathsheba, David mourned the loss of his son with these words, he cannot come to me, but I shall go to him.

So David was obviously counting on being reunited with his newborn son in this netherworld, this Abraham's bosom.

And as best as I can understand, when Christ died, he preached to the spirits in prison, we are told, and we don't know whether that was an annunciation of victory in connection with his resurrection or what, that too, something that the jury is out on, I just don't have a good handle on that as I would like, but I do get the impression that because he had been crucified and raised from the dead, he went to Abraham's bosom and vacated everyone there and took them with him to heaven.

He went to heaven bodily in his glorified resurrected body, but the spirits of those departed dead ones who were believers were removed from Abraham's bosom or paradise and taken to heaven with him.

[48 : 15] That's where they are now. And everyone who has died since the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, who was a believer, never went to paradise, went directly to heaven.

And that's the way it is with us today. Absent from the body and present with the Lord. What kind of body do we have in heaven? I don't know.

Are we there as disembodied spirits? Are we there inhabiting eternity? Because this is well, there are a number of factors that come into play.

And one is when we go to heaven, do we step into a timeless eternity?

Because if we do, we are not there for any period of time. time. We are there as a disembodied spirit, but we are not there walking around, looking at our watch, or flipping pages on a calendar, wondering how long it's going to be before so-and-so gets here.

[49 : 24] Because there is no time there. It is a different kind of existence altogether. And you say, what kind? And I say, I don't know.

it's just different. It's without time. And that just causes my mind to drop out. So when we are there, and you realize, of course, that everyone arrives in heaven in eternity at the same point.

So it's going to be one grand reunion. I mean, we get there when Abraham gets there. We get there when Lazarus gets there. We get there when Christ gets there.

because we don't come in staggered fashion. Well, now here are the believers from the 17th century, and this is the class of the 18th century, and this is the 19th century, and it takes that much time for each one to come along.

We all arrive at the same point, because time does not exist in heaven. Do you understand that?

[50 : 31] Well, if you do, please explain it to me. Isn't this fascinating? I tell you, nothing is more fascinating than the word. Even the stuff I don't know and understand I love, just because I know who is behind it all.

And I want to close and leave you with this thought. as regards the literality of these, the eternity of these, and all the rest of the questions that we can't answer, I take great, great comfort in this.

Whatever heaven is going to be, whatever hell is going to be, whatever they are going to be like, they are going to be just exactly what they ought to be based on God's sense of oughtness and rightness.

So there will be no legitimate criticism coming from anybody, because God does not do what is right.

right. God, what God does is right. You see the difference?

[51 : 55] God does not do what is right, because then our standards of rightness would come into play, and we would all have an opinion, but that doesn't matter.

So it isn't that God does what is right, it is what God does is right, because he is God, and he is right.

This means God himself is his own standard. He does not operate according to our standards. He has his own standard, and whatever his standard is, is what it ought to be.

I can just completely relax in that, and be at ease in that, say, he does all things well, and whatever he does, however he does it, is right, just because he is who he is.

And our Father, we are so grateful that you are the kind of God that you are. We have so many questions. We are perplexed about so many things. We know that the secret things belong unto the Lord.

[53 : 11] We are delighted that you have been pleased to reveal to us the things that you have, but we are also perfectly comfortable in what you have chosen to keep to yourself, because we know that that, too, is right, and it is as it ought to be.

Thank you for being that kind of God. Thank you for the way of salvation that you have made to us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We bless you for it in his wonderful name. Amen.