

Sooke Baptist Church  
Sunday, February 20, 2022  
9:30am, in-person

also on Facebook Live Stream  
and YouTube



**Life After Death**  
Revelation 20

Coffee/Question: Explain

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

**03:00**

We've laid a sufficient enough foundation, that we are now ready to answer the questions that were raised on Sunday, January 30.

YOUR QUESTIONS FROM SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2022

1. Is there conscious existence after physical death?

2. Who or what is thrown into the lake of fire?
3. How do we speak of the gospel in our culture?
4. Do all religions worship the same God, but just call him by different names?
5. Can a person's name be removed from the book of life?
6. When Jesus returns can people still choose to receive and believe in him?

Let's answer this question, first... from the perspective of those who follow Jesus.  
The scripture tells us...

To be absent  
from the body  
is to be present  
with the Lord.

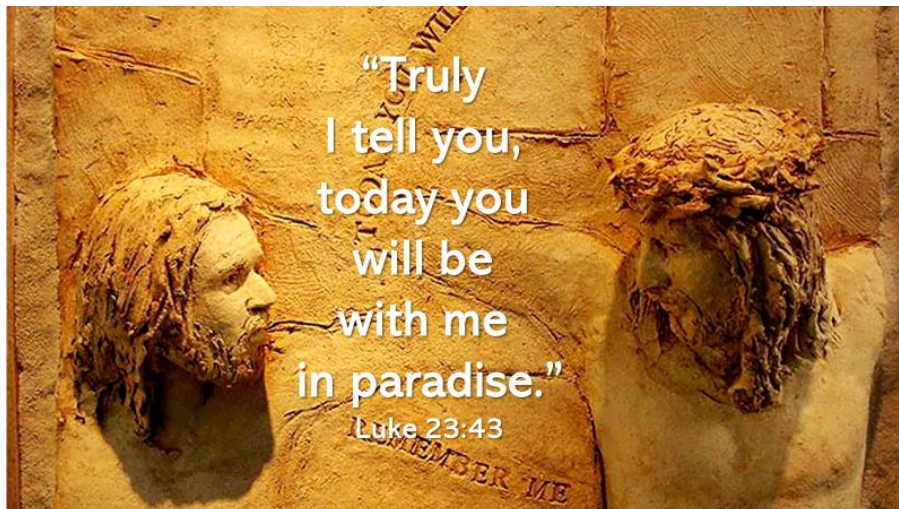
2 Corinthians 5:8



C.S. Lewis described the moment of physical death... like walking through a door... from one room into another.

For the follower of Jesus... to be absent from the body... is to be present with the Lord.

Jesus told the thief on the cross...



For the follower of Jesus... to be absent from the body... is to be present with the Lord.

What about those who die without Christ?

Where do they go?

Let's look at the answer given by Jesus.



In this parable Jesus taught about the reality of life after death. This story also stresses the importance of believing God and what God has said.

During Lazarus' and the rich man's lifetime on the earth, everyone would have known the rich man's name.

But Lazarus... was a nobody... his name was unknown...except to God.

This parable takes place before the resurrection of Jesus.

This detail is particularly important when noting where the two men went after they died.

The beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.

The rich man died, was buried, and went to Hades.

The term "Abraham's side" is found only once in the New Testament, here in the parable told by Jesus.

Lazarus went to "Abraham's side"... a place of rest, contentment, and peace.

In tragic contrast, the rich man found himself in Hades... a place of torment.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Abrahams-bosom.html>

There are three primary words used in the Scriptures to describe where a person goes when they die.

In the story told by Jesus, the rich man went to Hades.

But before we consider what Hades is, we need to first look at the word that was used in the OT.

Sheol  
Hades  
Gahenna

Sheol is a Hebrew word... often translated “grave” or “death.”  
It simply means “the place of the dead” or “the place of departed souls/spirits.”  
[gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org)

When told the news that Joseph had been killed, his father Jacob said...

Genesis 37:35  
...but Jacob refused to be comforted.  
“No,” he said,  
“In mourning will I go down  
to the grave [Sheol] to my son.”  
So his father wept for him.

Matthew Emerson wrote an article, entitled, “What is Sheol?” which is posted on the [desiringgod](http://desiringgod.com) website.

Emerson said that Sheol is symbolically characterized in the Old Testament as the opposite of ...



... the Promised Land that flowed with milk and honey... and that was filled with the light ... and the life-giving presence... of God.

In contrast, Sheol was understood to be a barren wilderness... a place of gloom.

In spite of the overwhelming power of the grave, that none can escape from it... the OT scriptures reveal that God's authority, nonetheless... extended over Sheol.

Proverbs 15:11  
Death [Sheol] and Destruction [Abaddon]  
lie open before the LORD...

Whatever God sees he holds authority over...and God sees everything.

In spite of death's power over all of humanity, and its seeming invincibility... the OT scriptures repeatedly speak of God's plan to rescue his people from the power of Sheol.

Psalm 16:10: ... you will not abandon me to the grave [Sheol], nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

Psalm 49:15: But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself.

Hosea 13:14: I will ransom them from the power of the grave [Sheol]; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave [Sheol] is your destruction?

You will not abandon me...

God will redeem me...

God will ransom his people...

These are statements of faith and hope!

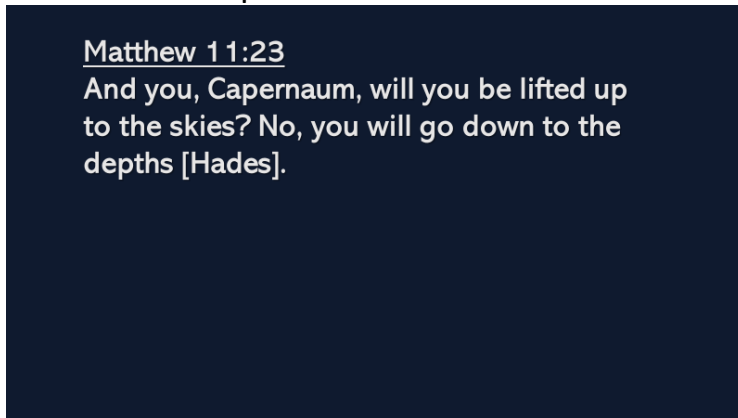
The details of God's plan to rescue... was progressively revealed in the OT and then gloriously brought into the light when Jesus came to the earth.

The second primary word used in the scripture to describe where a person goes when they die... is the Greek word "Hades" which is equivalent to the Hebrew word "Sheol."

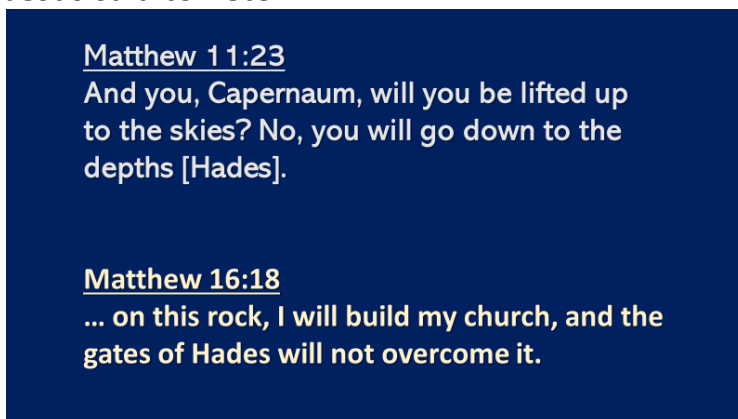


Like Sheol, Hades is "the place of the dead." [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org)

Jesus said of Capernaum...



Jesus said to Peter...



Jesus said to John on the island of Patmos...

Revelation 1:18

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.  
I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold  
I am alive for ever and ever!

And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades because... as the Apostles' Creed states, he "descended to the dead."

What does that mean?

Jesus experienced death as all humans do — he breathed his last breath, he gave up his spirit, his soul departed to the place of the dead, and his body was buried. But Hades... could not hold Jesus... because Jesus was sinless.

Jesus defeated death and the grave and Hades.

The proof that had done so... was his resurrection.

This is what Jesus confirmed to John on the island of Patmos, when he said I hold the keys of death and Hades.

This explains the victory statement and cry of 1 Corinthians 15

1 Corinthians 15:54-55

"Death is swallowed up in victory.  
O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?"

But what about right now.

Where are those who have died without Christ?

The rich man in the story told by Jesus was in Hades.

He was there because he had built his life upon his wealth.

What Jesus said in this story is that without his wealth, the formerly rich man was left with nothing... but his regrets.

His idol... the god-substitute he had trusted in... failed him.

Without his idol... the rich man had no status, no comfort, no purpose.

It is fascinating that the rich man didn't ask to go to where Abraham was.

His request was that Abraham send Lazarus to him.

Joshua Butler wrote of this and said, "The rich man refused to accept the reversal that had happened. The rich man wanted a servant in Hades – he wanted to be top dog like he had been when he lived on the earth."

The story Jesus told was a parable.

So we need to ask what did Jesus want to communicate by the description given...

**"In Hades, where [the rich] was in torment..."**

...and the phrase spoken by the rich man...

**"I am in agony in this fire."**

There is a difference between torment and agony... and torture.

Torture is inflicted upon a person from a source outside of them.

Torment and agony are internal.

In the NT this word "agony" is also translated anxious or grief, which describe a state of emotional turmoil... rather than physical pain.



Luke 2:48 (Mary speaking to 12 year old Jesus)

“Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been **anxiously** searching for you.”

Acts 20:37-38 (the response of the church at Ephesus to the news they would never see Paul again)

They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What **grieved** them most was his statement that they would never see his face again.

The loss of the rich man’s riches is what tormented him day and night.

Where are those who have died without Christ?

The answer provided by Jesus in the story he told is also confirmed in the vision seen by John in Revelation 20:12-13.

Revelation 20:12-13

And I saw the dead, great and small,  
standing before the throne, and books were opened.  
Another book was opened, which is the book of life.

The dead were judged according  
to what they had done as recorded in the books.

**The sea gave up the dead that were in it,  
and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them,  
and each person was judged  
according to what they had done.**

Those who die without Christ... are in Hades, awaiting the final judgment.

And those who die trusting in Christ?

Are they in the place Jesus spoke of as Abraham’ side?

Or are they asleep, as some would suggest based upon two particular verses?

1 Corinthians 15:20  
Christ has indeed been raised  
from the dead,  
the first-fruits of  
those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:14  
We believe that Jesus died and rose again  
and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus  
those who have fallen asleep in him.

To understand this phrase, “fallen asleep” we must interpret scripture with scripture... and also... through the experience of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15 identifies Jesus as the first-fruit.

What that means is that Jesus is the first human being to have died and then to have his physical body be raised from the dead as an immortal body.

Jesus is the first-fruit... which means there will be others.

The experience of Jesus will be the experience of all who are... in him.

That’s the future hope of all who follow Jesus.

But what about now?

This particular phrase “fallen asleep” was used in the time when the NT scriptures were penned... it was used by the early Christians... to describe the appearance of the body of a believer after their spirit had left it.

The body without a spirit looks like it is asleep.

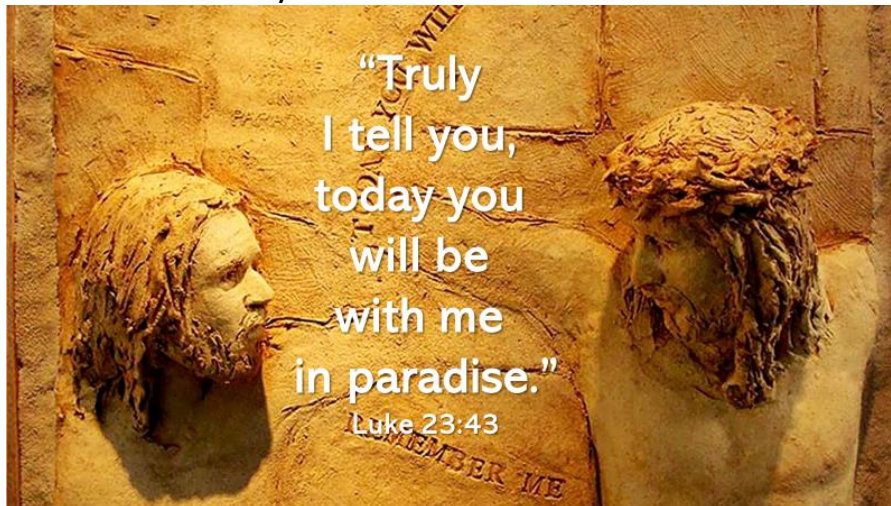
For Jesus’ followers who have died... their buried body awaits the future moment... the return of Jesus...when it will be raised from the dead immortal... and again be inhabited by the spirit of the one who right now... lives with the Father in his home.

What did Jesus say to his followers the night before he died?

John 14:2

In my Father's house are many rooms.  
I am going there  
to prepare a place for you.

What did Jesus say to the thief on the cross?



Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, 1:23, and said...

Philippians 1:23

"I am torn between the two,  
I desire to depart and be with Christ,  
which is better by far..."

What was Paul talking about?

To depart... to be absent from the body... is to be with... present with... the Lord.

Because Christ has walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and emerged victorious on the other side, he now guides all those who are united to him by faith... through that same valley, and into his Father's home.

The third primary word used in the Bible to describe where a person goes when they die... is...



The origin of this word and its usage came from an actual physical location found outside of Jerusalem in the valley of Hinnom.



Gahenna was where Israel after the days of David and Solomon committed spiritual adultery.



Gahenna was where the family of Abraham cheated on God.

Gahenna was a place of injustice.



It was where Israel sacrificed her children to the god Moloch.

Look at this description given in 2 Chronicles about the days of King Ahaz, who was the twelfth king after David.

2 Chronicles 28:1-3

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and also made idols for worshiping the Baals.

<sup>3</sup> He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his children in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

(See also 2 Chronicles 33:3-9; Jeremiah 32:32-35)

Jessica Brodie writes in christianity.com, “Much later, the valley of Hinnom was used as a [garbage dump]. Easton’s Bible Dictionary says, “Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and [the garbage of Jerusalem] was taken and consumed by fire that was always burning.”

When Jesus used the word Gahenna, to graphically describe the life that follows death for those who live without God... he did so with the intent to jar his listeners to their senses.

The outcome of sin is always loss, never gain.

There is one more thing to be aware of regarding Gahenna.

This piece will help us next week when we finish our study on Revelation 20, and particularly as we investigate what life in the lake of fire, the second death, will be like.



#1 on the map is the physical location of Gahenna in the Valley of Hinnom.

#2 on the map is where the temple in Jerusalem was located.

Do you see where Gahenna is in relation to the city of Jerusalem?

It is outside of the city.

When Jesus used the word Gahenna, he did so in order to communicate the truth that sin, death and hell will be cast outside of... the new creation.

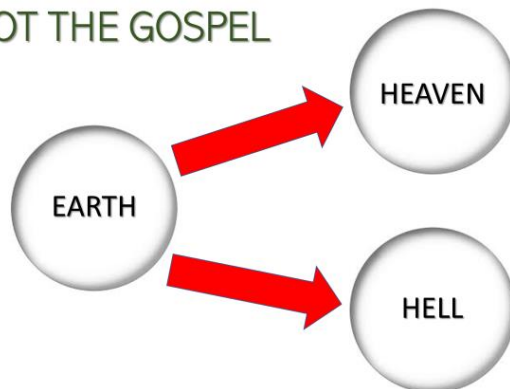
This is what we will investigate further next week.

As we wrap up, I want to remind you again of the slides I showed you several weeks ago.

God tells us there is life after death.

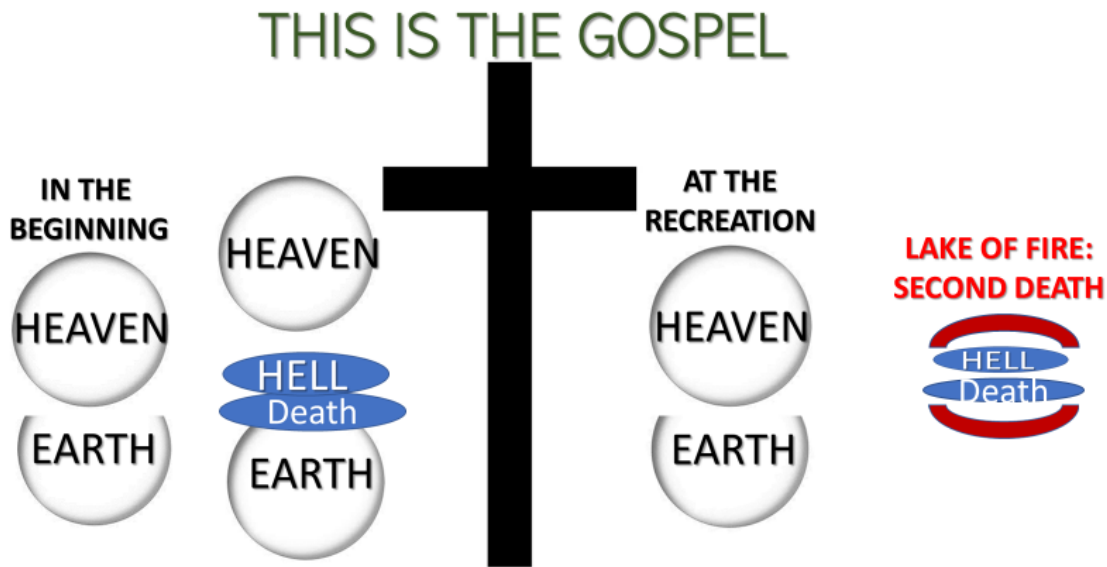
And God has revealed to humanity there are but two destinations.

THIS IS NOT THE GOSPEL



But this is not the gospel

What then is the gospel?



The gospel alone speaks the truth of who God is, who human beings are, what happened to this world and what God did in order to rescue and to save, and what he will ultimately do to make all things new.

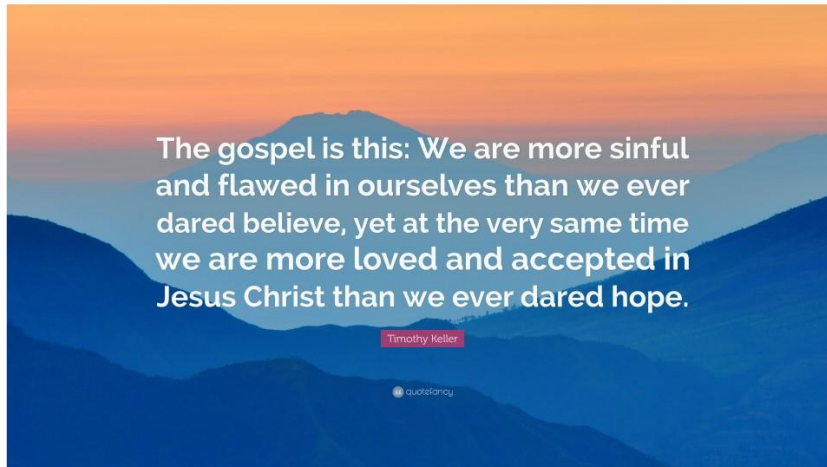
For the last several weeks we have endeavored to look in detail to what the Bible tells us about the life after death that is lived apart from God.

We have been confronted with sobering truths.

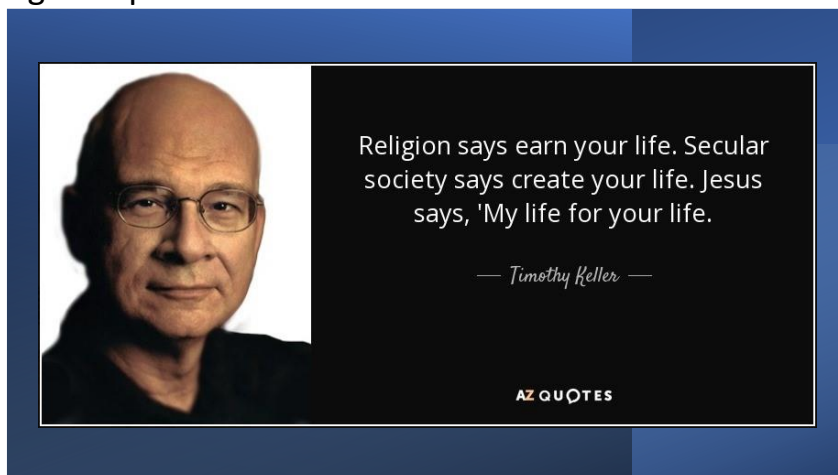
But even more so by stunning grace.

The destiny of every person is not fixed... it can be changed.

Tim Keller writes...



There is no good outcome for those who reject God in this lifetime. But in Jesus Christ there is hope... because Jesus gave his life in exchange for ours. Again I quote Tim Keller...



In Jesus, and through faith in him, a person's destiny can be changed. There is no news more astounding than this, no news more important to be told to our world.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned...