



Let me recap key points from the last couple of weeks where we have sought to understand and to clarify what the Bible says about hell and the lake of fire which is the second death.

Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone else did.  
He described it in graphic terms...

fire that burns but doesn't consume  
a worm that eats away at those who are cast out  
torment that never ends  
a lonely, foreboding darkness  
a weeping and gnashing of teeth  
a loss of hope

Randy Alcorn

There is a part of me, and I don't know if it is the same for you... that resonates with CS Lewis' statement about hell:

**"There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and especially of our Lord's own words."**

**C.S. Lewis, Problem of Pain.**

If we struggle to understand the second death and its necessity... this could indicate, and I've thought long and hard about this, this week... that I may not, that we may not see sin as God sees it, nor fully grasp the majesty of his holiness and the stunning goodness of his person.

Danny Burk wrote,

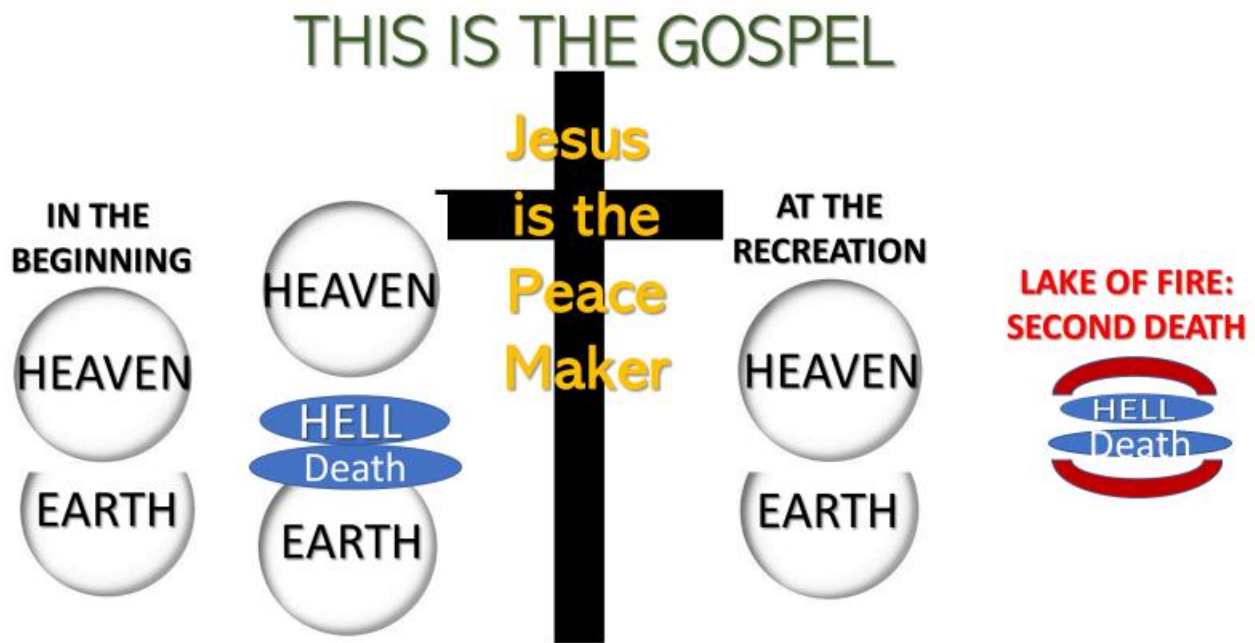
**"The seriousness of sin,  
and thus its consequences,  
is not measured by the sin itself,  
but by the value and the worth of  
the One sinned against."**

**Danny Burk**

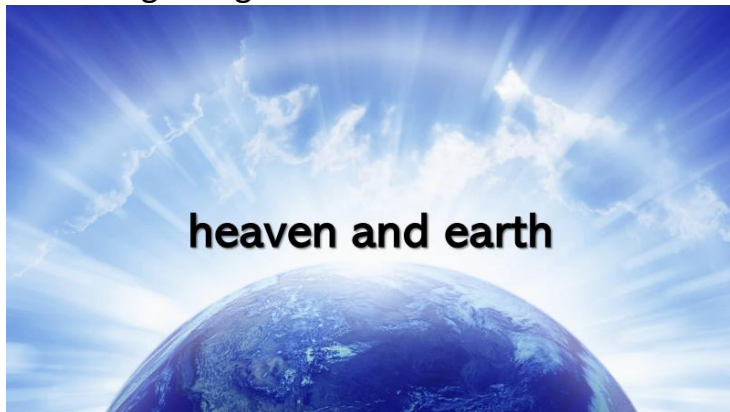
The lake of fire, which is the second death... is God's just and appropriate response to the horror of sin and its corrupting influence. It is not an over-reaction on the part of God.

"The second death fits the crime." Dr. Paul Copan

Look with me at the graphic I showed you two weeks ago.



In the beginning... God created heaven and earth...

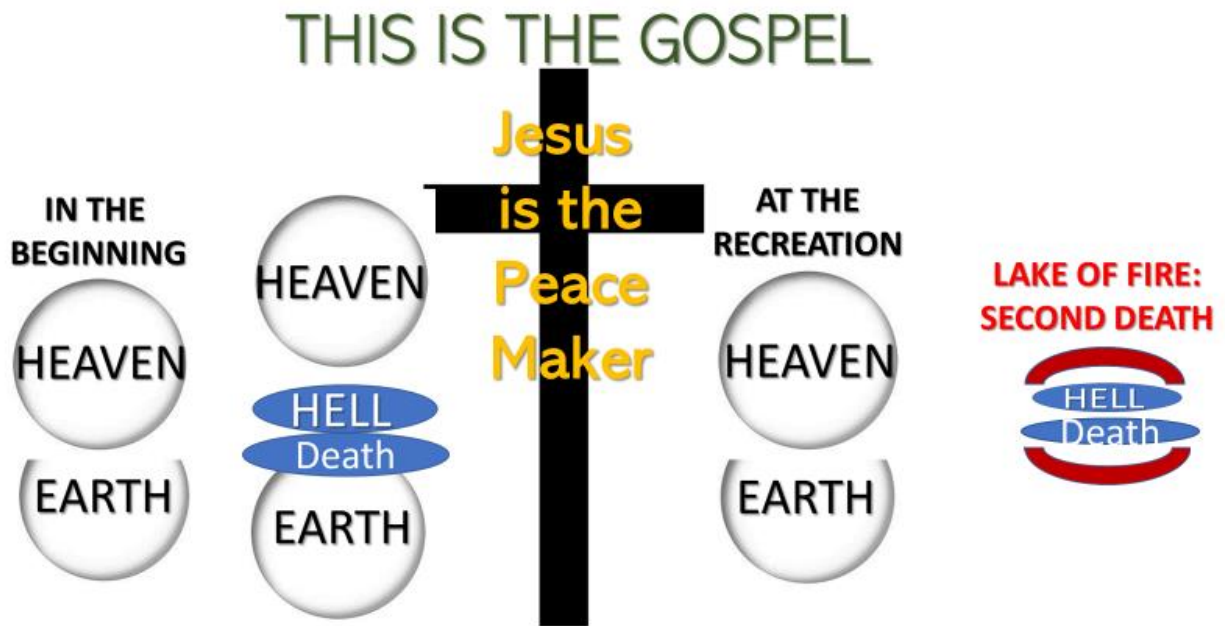


... and the two races of personal beings, angels and humans, to live in these two realms, in a relationship of fellowship and intimacy with himself and with one another.

In the beginning the two realms were connected... they were joined together.

When he had finished creating, the scripture says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Genesis 1:31

But what... once was... is no longer.  
God did not create the world as it now is.



As it had been with the angels, so it was with humanity.

The personal beings whom God had created perfect and good, were permitted by God to choose whether they would love him and align their lives with him.

We may think that in doing so God assumed a risk too great... and wonder why he would do this.

But in doing so, God reveals it is not in his nature to coerce a person to love him. Those who would live in fellowship with him, choose to do so.

Our first parents on behalf of us all chose not to obey God. Yes, they were deceived by the serpent.



But it was their hand that picked the fruit from the tree.

And it was their mouth that bit into ... and ate the forbidden fruit.

Their choice opened the door...as it were...



... for sin to enter into the core of their person, and in turn into the nature of all their descendants.

And with the entrance of sin into human experience, came also death and hell.

After they sinned, after God found them hiding, after God asked them if they had disobeyed him, after Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve, God spoke judgment upon them... a curse that not only fell upon them but upon all of us...



That same day, the Father, Son and Spirit said...

Genesis 3:22-23

“They must not be allowed to reach out their hand and take also from the tree of life and eat it and live forever.”

So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden...

God had warned them if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they would “surely die.”

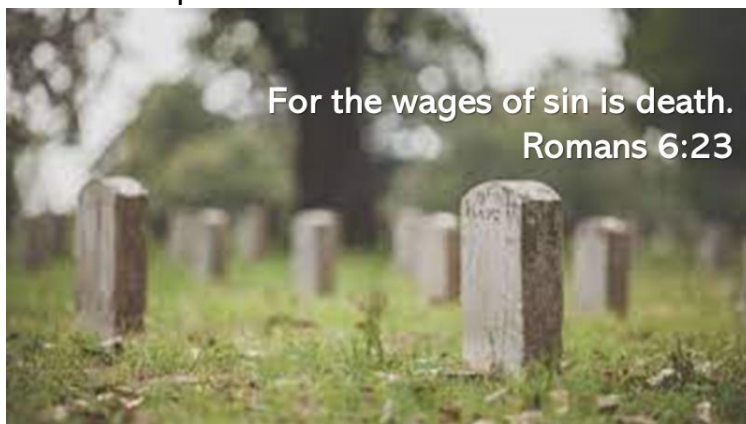
We must not miss the mercy and love of God that was expressed towards Adam and Eve when they were exiled.

The implementation of the curse of death, was delayed.

Yes, their bodies began to die that very day.

But the Judge of the earth let them live for years upon decades upon centuries before his just sentence was implemented?

The NT Scriptures are as clear as the OT.

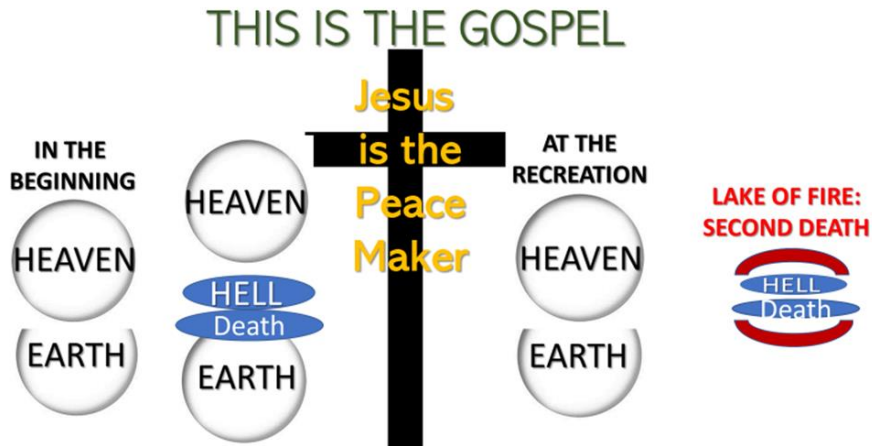


Why doesn't... God's just sentence of death fall upon each one of us... the very first time we choose to sin; the first very time we decide to do what is right in our own eyes rather than God's?

Before we answer that question, there are several other details to consider.

I remind you that the fateful act committed by our first parents, not only caused rupture between humanity and God... it also tore apart heaven and earth.





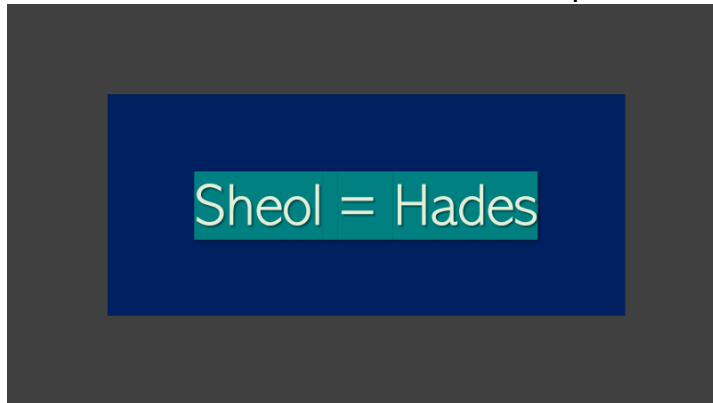
In the beginning... God did not create hell.  
 The necessity of hell... came about... because of the angels who sinned.

**2 Peter 2:4**  
**For if God did not spare angels  
 when they sinned,  
 but sent them to hell [Tartarus],  
 putting them into gloomy dungeons  
 to be held for judgment...**

There are four words used in the Bible to describe hell.  
 But only three of them pertain to human beings.

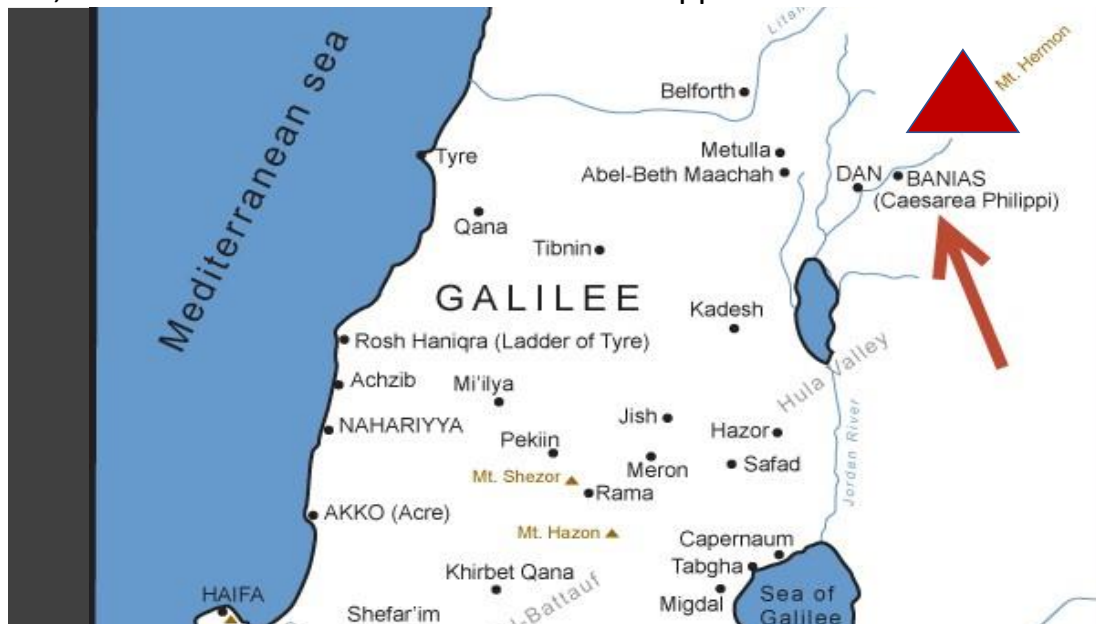
Tartarus  
 Sheol  
 Hades  
 Gahenna

Sheol is a Hebrew word used in the OT to describe the place where the spirit of a person went after their body died, where they waited for final judgment. Hades is a Greek word... that is the equivalent of Sheol.



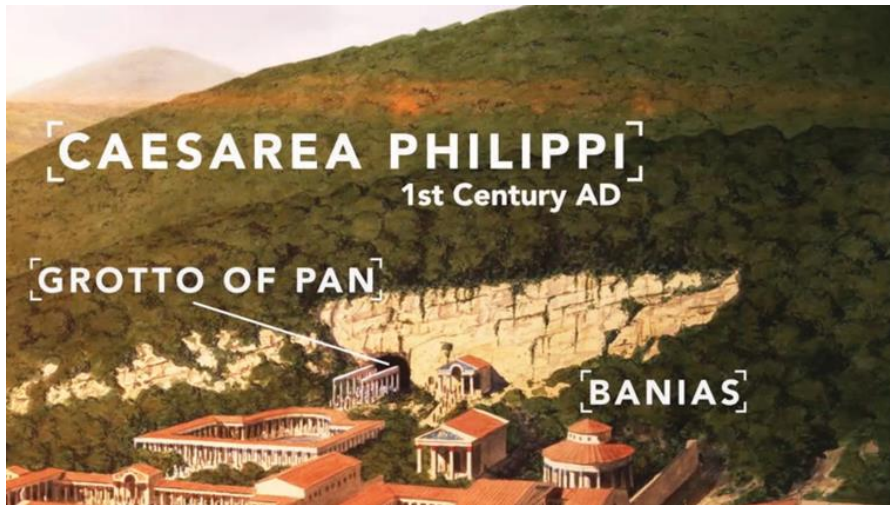
Based on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (Luke 16:19:31) Jesus told his listeners... that there were actually two parts to Sheol/Hades – a place of comfort (Abraham’s side) for those who died in relationship with God, and a place of torment and agony for those who died without God.

Before Jesus revealed his glory to Peter, James and John on a high mountain that many think was Mt. Hermon, before he told the disciples that he must suffer and die, he travelled with them to Caesarea Philippi....



The Greeks under Alexander the Great had conquered this area and built temples near the ancient city of Dan...for the worship of the god Pan, Zeus, Nemesis, as well as a temple to the cult of the “dancing goats.”





When the Romans conquered this same region, Herod the Great built a temple there, dedicated to the worship of Caesar Augustus.

Because the worship that took place at Caesarea Philippi was incredibly depraved, it was a region that devout Jews avoided because of the immorality that was practiced there.

The temples dedicated to the various gods were located in front of a rock face that rises up 100 feet and is 500 feet wide.

In the center of this rock face is a dark and ominous cave.



Sacrifices made to the god Pan, were thrown into the depths of that cave, which was so deep it could not be measured.

These details are important to be aware of.

This was the place to which Jesus brought his disciples; the place where he revealed to them that he was the promised Messiah (Matthew 16).

At the place where many different gods were worshiped, Jesus... first asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" and then he asked them, "Who do you say I am?"

Peter on behalf of them, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," to which Jesus affirmed Peter's assessment was correct.

Water that flowed out from this cave was a primary source of the Jordan River.



And the foreboding cave into which sacrifices were thrown was known as the...



Remember... hades/hell is a realm where the dead are held.

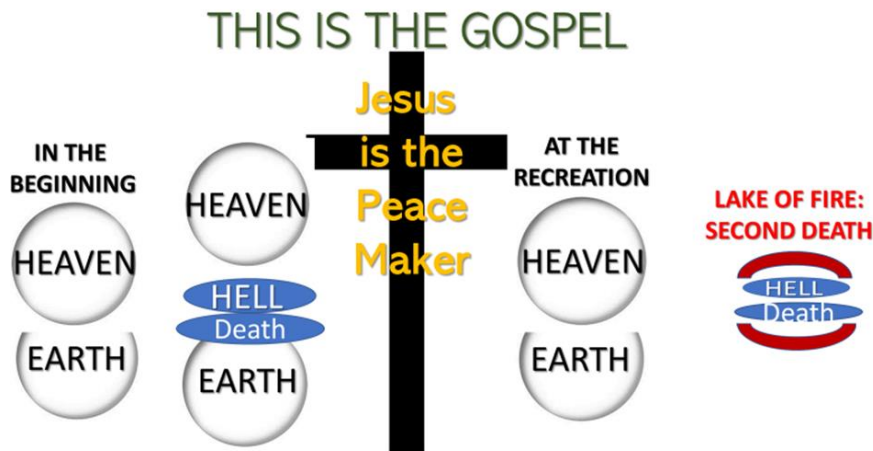
But like the water that flowed out from the cave, the influence of hades/hell spills out into this world.

It is incredible to me... that at this place... Jesus announced to the world, both seen and unseen, that Satan's time was over...that all the immorality of this place could not overwhelm and stain Jesus, but rather that his righteousness would expel it like darkness is expelled by light and that he would cleanse.

Jesus declared in no uncertain terms, that he would build, his church, and that the power of Hades could not stop him nor overwhelm his church.

[https://www.land-of-the-bible.com/Caesarea\\_Philippi](https://www.land-of-the-bible.com/Caesarea_Philippi)

Before we go further... we need to step back... for a moment... to our graphic.



On the very day Adam and Eve sinned, God promised Eve that an offspring of hers



...would crush the head of the serpent... who had deceived her and Adam... and who had incited them to rebel against God.

Throughout the time of the OT, across long centuries... the details of who the Rescuer would be were progressively revealed by God.

We know now... that the Rescuer was God the Son who became a man; whose name was Jesus; who lived a perfect life; and who sacrificed his life in order to pay humanity's sin debt.

We know now... that Jesus gave his life in exchange for ours... because we could not save ourselves; we could not undo what we had broken and ruined. The fact that it required God to save us, tells us just how horrendous sin and its consequences are.

No matter how difficult or offensive this is to hear, it is the truth... human beings are hopelessly trapped in their sin, without a way of escape, apart from Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died, he descended to Hades and overcame the power of death. How do we know this?  
Because he rose from the dead.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus bodily ascended into heaven. Now look at what Ephesians 4:7-10 says as to who also ascended with him.

#### Ephesians 4:7-10

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." [a] **Psalm 68:18**

<sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Our Lord Jesus descended to the earth – as John 1 says... the Word become flesh. At his death, our Savior descended even further – to the realm of the dead. And after his resurrection he ascended in victory to the Father's home where he was given all authority in heaven and earth.

The reign of Jesus, right now... extends over every inch of the universe, seen and unseen.

But who are the captives spoken of in Ephesians 4?

When Jesus ascended to the Father he led out of Sheol/Hades those who had trusted in God in the time of the OT.

Jesus did for the people of God... what God had promised them he would do.

**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?**

Can we even begin to imagine this scene described in Psalm 68 and Ephesians 4?

**Ephesians 4:7-10**

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Jesus returned to the Father's home in great victory and with him were many captives... tens of thousands upon thousands upon tens of thousands upon thousands... of men and women and children who had trusted in God, who had looked ahead in faith to the coming of the Messiah and who were rescued from Hades by Jesus.

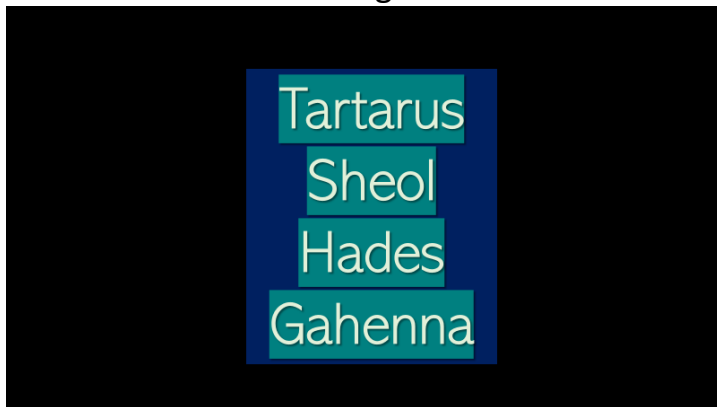
This is why in this present time, those who die trusting in Jesus no longer go to Hades... to a place of comfort, but to the Father's home where Jesus has prepared a place for them.

The passage in Ephesians 4 reveals one more remarkable detail. The ascension of Jesus resulted in the giving of the Holy Spirit to the people of God... and through the Spirit gifts of grace are given to the followers of Jesus.

These supernatural gifts of grace... are victory gifts. Isn't that incredible?

How do we know Jesus lives and that he holds the keys of death and Hades? The Holy Spirit's gifting of supernatural abilities to the followers of Jesus, along with the empty tomb, is the proof.

The third word in our English Bibles that is translated hell is the Greek word...



Gahenna was an actual location outside of the city of Jerusalem.



It was a place of spiritual adultery, where in the times of the kings, Israel had cheated on God, by worshiping the idols of the peoples who had lived in the land before God gave it to them.



Gahenna was the place where Israel sacrificed her children to the god Moloch... by burning them in the fire.



Gahenna was a place of horror... and therefore an appropriate symbol of what life without God is like.

Some in hearing about the fire of Gahenna suggest it is only an exaggerated metaphor, and that in reality it is not as bad as one may think.

John Piper wrote about this and said:

“Do people use such symbols of horror because the reality is less horrible?... The metaphor of fire is used, not because it goes beyond reality, but because the reality it describes goes beyond words.”

John Piper

[desiringgod.org/messages/gods-wrath](http://desiringgod.org/messages/gods-wrath)

Lee Strobel adds,

“The danger of describing the lake of fire as an apocalyptic symbol is that a person can be tempted to think it is not as bad as they had imagined, when in fact, the truth is far worse than anyone can envision. This is why metaphors and symbols are used... because no literal description can convey the second death’s horrors.”

Lee Strobel, Case for Heaven

Dr Paul Copan attempted to describe an existence apart from God. He said,

“[The second death] is to be cut off from the source of life and joy, and separated from God’s blessings forever. Darkness evokes this sense of separation and removal. The image of fire represents God’s judgment. The worse loss for any human being is to be cut off and banished away from God.”

Dr. Paul Coplan

Case for Heaven

CS Lewis said this to those who argued against the doctrine of the second death...

“In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of the second death, is itself a question:

**‘What else are you wanting God to do?’  
that he hasn’t already done  
at Golgotha through Jesus Christ?’**

C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain



The rich man in the parable told by Jesus, asked Abraham, "I beg you, send Lazarus to my family...Let him warn them, so that they will not come to this place of torment."

Abraham answered, "They have Moses and the Prophets: let them listen to them." The rich man replied, "No, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."

Abraham answered, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." Luke 16

Remember the question I earlier asked as to why God didn't immediately exile Adam and Eve to the second death, but instead exiled them from the Garden? And why when we sin for the first time, God doesn't pronounce judgment upon us immediately, but allows us to continue to live for years and decades?

The answer to these two questions has everything to do with who God is.

It is true... you and I didn't choose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. In that sense we didn't get a choice whether or not we would love God. Our first parents acted on behalf ...of us all... and the consequence of their choice resulted in ...all of us... entering life as a sinner, as an enemy of God.

But God who is rich in mercy and great in grace, freely offers in Jesus Christ amnesty, forgiveness and adoption... to all who would repent of their sin and receive him as their God and Savior.

And so, like Adam and Eve...



**Everyone has a choice!**

Will we obey God?

Will we choose to remain an enemy of God, or will we receive his terms of peace?

Right now every person enters life as an exile because of the choice made by our first parents.

But whether or not we remain an exile for all of eternity is the choice before every person.

Lee Strobel says, **“The outcome of life without God is a hard truth. But it is not the only truth. Jesus is the truth and in him there is rescue.”**

But at the return of Jesus, the time of opportunity to be reconciled with God will come to an end.

This is what the Bible tells us in Revelation 20.

When Jesus returns every person will appear before God, who will judge the words and actions of every person.

But do you realize that at the return of Jesus, when every person stands before God, that they will do so in a resurrected body?

Acts 24:15

...there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

John 5:28-29

... a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

Life in the age to come, whether with God or away from God... will be an embodied life.

And what will be the criteria by which God judges all human beings when Jesus returns to the earth?

Whether or not their actions and words aligned with the glory of his being.

Did they act and speak like him, or like the dragon who is Satan?

Let me say it again... because it is of the utmost importance... in this lifetime, God gives extended and repeated opportunity to every son and daughter of Adam and Eve to come home to him.

He gives to everyone, days, weeks, months, years, decades... to change their destiny.

If the very best gift, offered to us by a holy and gracious God... a gift purchased with his life-blood is rejected... then all that remain is the second death... a place, DA Carson writes, “where people will continue to rebel, will continue to insist on their own way, will continue societal structures of hatred and prejudice, will continue to defy the living God.”

Randy Alcorn writes,

**“The recreated heaven and earth...  
...and the lake of fire...  
are places defined by  
God’s presence or absence;  
by God’s grace or his wrath.  
Whose we are, not where we are,  
determines our joy or misery  
in the life that will be lived in eternity.”**

Randy Alcorn

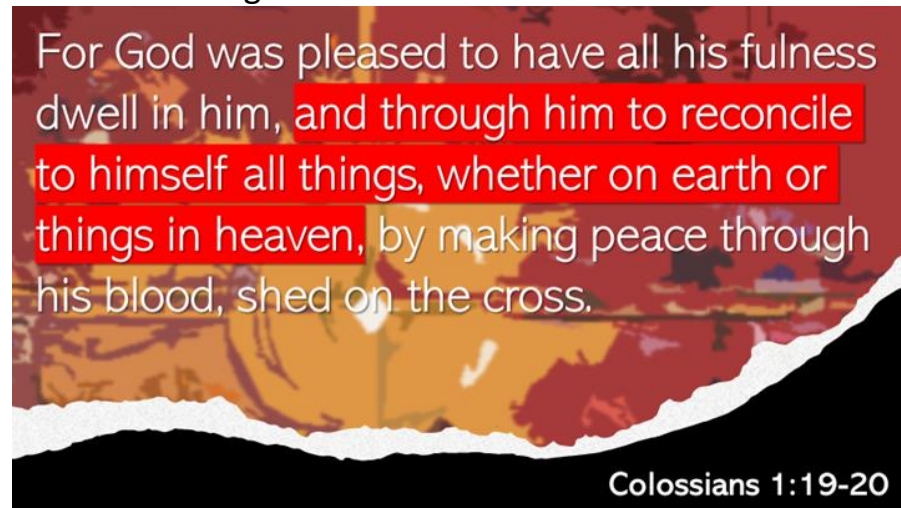
**“To transport a person from the lake of fire to the new heaven and earth would bring them no joy unless they had a loving and transformed relationship with God; that is the result of a work of regeneration that only the Holy Spirit can bring about in those who receive and believe in Jesus.”**

**“And that transformation and work of regeneration can only be realized in this present time, not in eternity.”**

We will turn in the weeks ahead to consider the new heaven and the new earth. But as the scriptures first presented the second death, so we have studied it first.

It is ironic that in this present time... Satan works hard in the court of public opinion... to portray life with God... as being boring and undesirable.

The Bible portrays the new heaven and the new earth as the setting of joy without end... as redeemed humanity with the holy angels participates with God in the rebuilding of a universe...



...where all things have been reconciled by Christ, and permeated by God's righteousness.

#### 1 Timothy 2:4

...God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

Salvation is offered to all, but not all freely receive it.

What Jesus said is true... John 6:44...

**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.**

And what the Spirit said is also true... Revelation 22:17

**Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes, take the free gift of the water of life.**

**Prayers of the People:**

**“Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” Psalm 100**

**We are always in your presence. But how prone we are to forget that you, the LORD, are our God.**

**Please forgive us for forgetting that you will never leave us nor forget us.**

**Prayers of the People:**

**“Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” Psalm 100**

**When we were in our mother’s womb, you formed us, you knit us together. Please forgive us when we act as if our life is ours to spend as we wish rather than to embrace your plans for us and to trust you to do what is good in us.**

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**Prayers of the People:**

**"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people." 1 Timothy 2:1**

We pray for the people of the Ukraine...

- For supernatural protection
- For peace
- For a restraining and reversal of president Putin's ambitions
- For boldness, love and compassion for the church

**Prayers of the People:**

**"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people." 1 Timothy 2:1**

We ask for grace for our sister church El Redil Caldas and John Paul and Sara who are worship leaders and on the leadership Team.



**Prayers of the People:**

**"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people." 1 Timothy 2:1**

We pray for individuals and families in our church family who are in need of your help, your sustaining grace and your healing power.

**Prayers of the People:**

**Father, glorify your Son in the midst of his people. Awaken your church to see and to experience Jesus in all of his glory. May your Holy Spirit be poured out upon us, turning us from sin and self-centeredness. Give "life and breath to dry bones." Would you so fill us with your life, light and power, that your transforming Spirit would change the people of our community? Lord, Jesus, live out your life in us in a way that attracts those who don't yet know you... and brings conviction of sin... and convinces many to trust in you for salvation. Amen.**