

AUGUST 28th, 2016

VIDEO: -OLOGY INTRO

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INTRODUCTION

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

We have come to the last week of our series on what we believe, and this week we are going to look at Heaven and Hell.

There is a whole bunch and a little bit of time. So some of this we are going to talk about, but not spend a lot of time on.

Please, please, please ... if you have any questions don't hesitate to ask. You can talk to me after the sermon, call me, visit me, email me, or ask a question through ask.fm.

Today is a week of joy and hope, but it is also a week that weighs heavy on our souls. It should weigh heavy on our souls.

Several years ago, I was interviewing a friend for a class project. She is an atheist and the purpose of the interview was to engage in conversation and get candid honest answers. To help us understand, with-out argument, what others believe.

As I was talking to my friend she said ... you know it is harder for an atheist when someone dies. When my grandma died, she ceased to exist. She was gone. You at least have the hope that

the ones you love are in heaven, that they are somewhere better.

I said, yes, but when my friends who do not believe in God die ... I believe that they do not go to Heaven and instead they live an eternity of punishment. This breaks my heart.

So yes, when we look at Heaven ... we have such great hope. But when we look at Hell ... we have such great pain.

So what is Heaven and Hell and where do we go when we die?

HOLLYWOOD

Hollywood has messed us all up. I say Hollywood, but you know what I mean. Movies, Books, Paintings, Music ... media has changed and skewed our views on Heaven and Hell. Most of us have a view of Heaven and Hell, not as what God has told us through His Word, but rather ... what the world has told us.

Do you know what happens if you google Heaven? All of the images are of clouds. They are all glowing clouds and a glowing staircase and some of them even have people sitting on clouds.

Is this Heaven? Are we going to go and sit on clouds?

Or maybe, each one of us has our own personal Heaven. Like the movie, What Dreams May Come. Many watched that movie and the imagery and idea of Heaven was fitting. Heaven to each person is what they view as Heaven. Each of us will have a different Heaven. Is this true?

What about Hell? Google Hell and you will see picture after picture after picture of fire. Fire. Fire. Fire. That is hell. There are people being tortured and tormented. Burning but not dying.

We have also been given the idea that Satan rules Hell. He is the one lashing out the torment to those that have died. He reigns in Hell. It is his realm, his domain. Is this true? Is this Hell?

WHERE DO WE GO WHEN WE DIE?

We are going to break this into two parts today:

- Where do we go when we die?
- Where do we go after judgment?

First question is ... where do we go when we die?

Like if I died right now, where do we go when we die?

There is a ton of scripture surrounding this, but I am just going to give you a glimpse of the what the Bible says.

Where do we go when we die?

PSALMS 18:5

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⁵the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

PROVERBS 5:5

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⁵ Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol;

MATTHEW 11:23

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²³And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

The first thing we need to look at is this word Hades or Sheol. This word is used 75 times in the Bible. In every instance this is a negative thing, this is a bad thing. So what is Hades and where is Hades?

First, we need to understand that there are two different things that are being talked about here.

The first use of Hades refers to the place of the dead, or the place where we bury our dead. It refers to the place beneath the surface where the dead go. This is not a location as in where the spirits of the dead go, rather this is the state of the physical body after one dies. It is the grave. A place that none of us long to be. Death. Always pictured as a thing to be dreaded.

The second use of Hades refers to the place where the spirits of some of the dead go, where they will exist in an intermediate state until Christ's return.

PSALM 9:17

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¹⁷The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

LUKE 16:22-23

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²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,

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²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

So then Hades is the grave, which is where every physical 'body' that dies goes, but Hades in a spiritual sense is the intermediate dwelling place for wicked souls awaiting Christ's return and final judgment.

SLIDE 8 – PIC OF DIAGRAM

So then, what about the souls of the righteous? The intermediate dwelling place for the righteous is never called Sheol or Hades. Above it was referred to as Abraham's Side ... it is also referred to as:

LUKE 23:43

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⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:8

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⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

REVELATION 6:8-9

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⁸And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth,

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to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

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⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

The wicked came from Hades and the righteous came from under the altar, under the heavenly altar.

SLIDE 14 – PIC OF DIAGRAM

We will refer to this intermediate state for the righteous as Paradise. What you need to understand is that this is not a part of Hades, it is separate from Hades. They are two different places. One for the righteous, one for the unrighteous.

So, where is Hades and Paradise located?

It's hard to say for sure. It is not a part of this visible creation. Some would say that Hades is below us at the center of the Earth and that Paradise is located somewhere in the clouds. We see no scriptural evidence of this.

In fact, the scriptural evidence that we see is that these places are located somewhere in the invisible creation. This leads us to our discussion on Heaven.

HEAVEN

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There is a tremendous amount of confusion on Heaven. So we are going to try to clarify it here.

When the Bible speaks of Heaven, what exactly is the Bible referring to?

Well, there are three things that are referred to when speaking of Heaven.

First, there is the **COSMOLOGICAL HEAVENS**. This is referring to the cosmos, the universe, the galaxies. It is referring to the part of the physical creation that is above us.

It is the place where the birds fly

GENESIS 1:26

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²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens ..."

It is the place where clouds exist

PSALM 147:8

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⁸He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills.

It is the place where rain, snow, and hail come from.

JOSHUA 10:11

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¹¹And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died.

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There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

It is the place where the stars and planets exist

GENESIS 26:4

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⁴I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,

Second, there is the **THEOLOGICAL HEAVEN**. This is referring to the part of the invisible creation where God, for lack of better word, dwells. It is His throne room.

This is the sense in which angels are in Heaven and from Heaven. This is the Heaven that John entered and saw God sitting on the throne.

WHERE DO WE GO?

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So now, back to the question of where do we go when we die?

Where is Paradise and Hades located?

The best way to answer this is to look at what we know of Paradise. We know that when we, who are in Christ, die that we will go to be with Him.

PHILIPPIANS 1:23

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²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

And we know that Christ is with God in Heaven

ACTS 7:55

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⁵⁵But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Which leads us to conclude that Paradise is either in the throne room of God or very near it.

So when we, who are in Christ, die ... we go to Heaven. We go to be with Christ. And when those who are not in Christ die, they go to Hades/Sheol. This is also in the spiritual dimension, not part of the visible creation.

BUT ... BUT ... this is not our final, eternal destination.

SLIDE 24 – PIC OF DIAGRAM

Heaven is not our final, eternal destination. It is where we go in the intermediate state. Of all of the views of Heaven and Hell, this is one of the greatest misconceptions. We believe that Heaven is our final, eternal destination. Heaven is merely where we go to await Christ's second coming and our glorified bodies.

So then, where do we go for eternity once we have attained our glorified bodies?

NEW EARTH

Where we will go for eternity doesn't even exist yet. It will not exist until Jesus' second coming. We first hear of our eternal destination through the prophet Isaiah.

ISAIAH 65:17-19

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¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

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¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

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¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.

REVELATION 21:1-5

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¹Then 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.

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²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

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³And 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.

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⁴He 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."

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⁵And 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."

Be sure though, this will be as glorious as you have always imagined Heaven to be. This will be a new physical Earth and we will have new physical bodies. It will be Earth as it was meant to be. No sin and none of the effects of sin. No weeping, no death, no pain.

Not just that ... but there will be no possibility for sin. Satan is defeated, totally. There is no need for the tree of Good and Evil because we who are with God have already proven our obedience to Him by believing in His Son.

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What an exciting, glorious, awesome thing. It is what I long for and hope for. It is where I want to spend eternity.

But what about everyone else?

HELL

What about Hell. What about those that are against God? The unrighteous.

Currently they are awaiting in Hades, a place that is described as undesirable and we know that after the final battle ... there will be judgment and then condemnation. The unrighteous will spend an eternity in Hell.

REVELATION 21:6-8

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⁶And 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.

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⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

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⁸But 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."

So then, what is the nature of Hell. What are we told about the destination of the unrighteous?

The first image of Hell that we see is that of a garbage heap. It is always burning and full of flesh eating maggots.

MATTHEW 5:22

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²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

MARK 9:47-48

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⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

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⁴⁸where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

Hell is also pictured as a place of darkness.

MATTHEW 8:12

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¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Finally, Hell is seen as separation from God

MATTHEW 7:23

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²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

REVELATION 22:14-15

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¹⁴Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

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¹⁵Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE

Hell is a horrible place. A place of suffering. But a question that is often asked is ... is this a literal description or a figurative description. God often speaks figuratively about spiritual things ... does He not do the same with Hell?

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It has been suggested that if this is to be taken figuratively then

- the worms represent the sinner's conscience nagging and gnawing.
- The fire might be better understood as an internal burning in the hearts of the lost for God, that can never be quenched.
- The darkness is defined by the good things that are lacking; hope, joy, love, peace, light, God

Leaving us the only literal image being that of being completely separated from God and everything else represents the torment that we will experience being separate from God for eternity.

I want to pause here ... I want you to understand something perfectly clear here. When I hear this, my first instinct is ... good. I couldn't imagine worms eating at my body forever, or my body being on fire for ever ... I guess I would rather have internal turmoil than physical turmoil.

But we know how absolutely untrue that is. If the worms and the fire and the darkness are just imagery ... they are a terrible imagery and you can be sure that whatever the suffering in Hell is, it is greater than you can imagine or fathom. It is a place of suffering. Weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Honestly, it seems unlikely that it will be only spiritual suffering, because the wicked too will receive new bodies.

Either way though, Hell is real and the suffering is very real and it is eternal.

SLIDE 45 – FINAL PICTURE SHOWING “NEW EARTH” AND “HELL”

CHALLENGE

So where does this leave us?

We have great hope and we have great need. We have great hope and we have great need.

It doesn't matter what you are going through now. Physically, mentally. It doesn't matter what pain or burden you have. If you put your faith in Christ. If you trust Him and know Him as Lord and Savior then you will get to spend eternity with Him. A new body on a new Earth, a perfect body on a perfect Earth. No pain, no suffering, no crying, no weeping, no death. Just plain old awesomeness.

But we have a great need. Because when we hear about Hell ... we know that this means that some of our family and friends and neighbors and coworkers will experience Hell for eternity. This should break your heart. This to some degree should terrify you. It should give you a tremendous amount of urgency.

Next week we will start our new sermon series, "One Matters" where we will look at God's view of mankind and His desire to save all of us. Every single one and what our part in this is. Why do we make God known? Because One Matters ... and we will spend a handful of weeks looking at how do we do this? How do we fulfill the great commission and make God known?

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PRAYER

COMMUNION