



The Essentials: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine Class #8 – End Times

I. The Study of End Times

- a. The study of end times is commonly referred to as *Eschatology*
 - i. The term *Eschatology* is a compound word that comes from two Greek words – *eschatos* which means “last or end” and *logos* which means “to speak or to discourse”
 - ii. *Eschatology* can simply be defined as the “study of the end” – whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, or the end of the world
 - iii. It is the study of the future and final events mentioned in the Bible concerning humankind (believer and non-believer), the world, death, hell, heaven, Satan, judgment, etc.
 - iv. The Bible speaks extensively about God’s program & plan for the future – “*God has revealed to us in His Word what is going to happen in the future*”
 - v. As Christians it is important that we understand what the Bible says about the future – Many people have questions regarding the future and we must be ready and prepared to give **biblical answers**
- b. Now, the study of Eschatology (end times) generally falls into two categories: Personal Eschatology and General Eschatology
 - i. **Personal Eschatology** focuses on the study of the end of an individual life (believer and non-believer) in this present world and their final destination in the life to come
 - ii. **General Eschatology** focuses on the study of the end of this present age and God’s final plans and purposes for the age to come
 - iii. Therefore, for our study tonight, we are going to focus our attention on personal eschatology and next week we will consider general eschatology
 - iv. In our study of personal eschatology, we are going to examine the doctrine of heaven and the doctrine of hell (the final destinations):

II. The Doctrine of Heaven: The Definition of Heaven

- a. The biblical word *Heaven* is used in three different ways in the Bible: 1) The Earth’s Atmosphere (Matt. 6:26) 2) The Realm of Space (Matt. 24:29) 3) The Dwelling Place of God (Psalm 11:4)
 - i. **2 Corinthians 12:2, 4** – “*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven...how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*”
 - ii. Therefore, the term Heaven (i.e. the third Heaven) can be defined as the place where God dwells and the place where God has chosen to fully manifest His presence and make known His glory
- b. Now, when we say that God dwells in Heaven we do not mean He is localized and not omnipresent (God is All-Present Cf. **Psalm 139:7-9**)
 - i. However, we simply mean that He has chosen Heaven to be the place where He fully manifests His presence and glory in a special way (the throne from which He rules the universe)

III. The Doctrine of Heaven: *The Inhabitants of Heaven*

- a. Heaven is inhabited by God (cf. Psalm 115:3), by the holy angels (Matthew 18:10), and by the redeemed (the saints of all the ages)
 - i. When a believer dies in Christ, their body goes to the grave, but their conscious spirit and soul goes to Heaven (into the Presence of God)
 - ii. **Luke 23:42-43** – *“Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’*
 - iii. **2 Corinthians 5:8** – *“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*
 - iv. **Philippians 1:23** – *“For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”*

IV. The Doctrine of Heaven: *The Location of Heaven*

- a. Heaven is an actual “Place” and not just a “State of Mind” as many outside of the evangelical world would claim it to be
 - i. The New Testament clearly teaches the idea of heaven being a location:
 - ii. 1) When Jesus ascended into heaven, the Scriptures clearly indicate that He went to a place/location – *“...Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into Heaven.”* Cf. **Acts 1:11**
 - iii. 2) In **Acts 7:55-56**, Stephen did not merely see symbols of a state of mind, however, his eyes were open to see a spiritual dimension/location of reality which God has hidden from us in this present age
 - iv. **Acts 7:55-56** – *“But he, being fully of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’”*
 - v. 3) In **John 14:2-3**, the Lord Jesus used the word “place” to describe Heaven, *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*
- b. Now, since Heaven is a real place/location, some believe it is located in a far corner of this space-time world, however, others believe it may be located in an entirely different dimension
 - i. It may be located in our present universe or it may be located in a different, unseen universe (a universe next door that is normally hidden but sometimes opened)
 - ii. Randy Alcorn declares, *“Scientists at Yale, Princeton, and Stanford, among others, postulate that there are ten unobservable dimensions and likely an infinite number of imperceptible universes.”*
 - iii. Interestingly, after His resurrection, Jesus seemed to step in and out of this invisible space-time dimension in His resurrection body Cf. **Luke 24:31; John 20:26**

V. The Doctrine of Heaven: *The Nature of Heaven (What is Heaven Like?)*

- a. First, Heaven is a place Far Better than Earth
 - i. *“For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”* Cf. **Philippians 1:23**
- b. Second, Heaven is a place of Beauty
 - i. *“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.”* Cf. **Psalm 50:2**
- c. Third, Heaven is a place of Joy
 - i. *“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* Cf. **Psalm 16:11**

- d. Fourth, Heaven is a place of Immortality
 - i. *“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54*
- e. Fifth, Heaven is a place of Rest
 - i. *“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who died in the Lord from now on.”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” Cf. Revelation 14:13*
- f. Sixth, Heaven is a place of Reunion
 - i. *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*
- g. Seventh, Heaven is a place of Reward
 - i. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10*
- h. Eighth, Heaven is a place of Worship
 - i. *“The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!’” Cf. Revelation 4:8*

VI. **Moreover, from Revelation 6:9-11, we can learn a few things about Heaven:**

- a. Revelation 6:9-11 – “When 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 testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.” – A

Few Observations:

- i. First, when these martyrs died on Earth, they relocated to Heaven (Vs. 9)
- ii. Second, people in Heaven will be remembered for their lives on Earth. These martyrs were known and identified as the ones who were *“slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.”* (Vs. 9)
- iii. Third, we are told that the martyrs, *“cried with a loud voice,”* this means in Heaven people are able to express themselves audibly (vs. 10)
- iv. Fourth, people in Heaven can raise their voices, *“...they cried with a loud voice,”* this indicates that they are rational, communicative, and emotional beings, like people on Earth (Vs. 10)
- v. Fifth, the martyrs are fully conscious, rational, and aware of each other, God, and the situation on earth
- vi. Sixth, those in Heaven are free to ask God questions, which means they have an audience with God. It also means they need to learn. In Heaven, people desire understanding and pursue it.
- vii. Seventh, people in Heaven know what’s happening on Earth (Vs. 10). The martyrs know enough to realize that those who killed them have not yet been judged.
- viii. Eighth, the martyrs clearly remember their lives on Earth (Vs. 10). They even remember that they were murdered.

- ix. Ninth, those in Heaven see God's attributes, "...**O Lord, holy and true**..." in a way that makes His judgment of sin more understandable
- x. Tenth, God answers their question (Vs. 11), indicating communication and process in Heaven. It also demonstrates that we won't know everything in Heaven – if we did, we would have no questions. The martyrs knew more after God answered their question than before they asked it. **There is learning in Heaven.**

VII. **The Doctrine of Heaven: Common Questions concerning Heaven**

- a. Question #1 – “Will those who die in infancy remain babies in Heaven?”
 - i. **Answer** – Probably not. The Bible teaches us that Heaven is a place of maturity and perfection (Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:10-12), and babies stunted in their growth, short of maturity, would not reflect a state of maturity. Those who were not granted earthly maturity will attain it in Heaven.
- b. Question #2 – “Will everyone be equally blessed in Heaven?”
 - i. **Answer** – The evidence seems to support the negative answer. Everyone in Heaven will be fully blessed, but not everyone will be equally blessed. Every believer's cup will be full and running over, but not everyone's cup will be the same size. We determine in time what our capacity for appreciating God will be in eternity. Our temporal obedience will determine our reward in eternity (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- c. Question #3 – “Will we eat in Heaven?”
 - i. **Answer** – Yes, but for enjoyment, not for sustenance – for pleasure rather than necessity. The physical resurrection body is supernaturally sourced rather than naturally sourced (1 Cor. 15:44). Jesus' resurrected body proves that our resurrected bodies are capable of eating real food.
- d. Question #4 – “Will we recognize loved ones in Heaven?”
 - i. **Answer** – Yes. Moses and Elijah were recognized when they appeared from Heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3) – Peter even acknowledged them by name (Matt. 17:4). There seems to be a personal identity by which we will be recognized each other in heaven – this is implied in Paul's comfort of the bereaved among the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:13-18) and in Jesus' response to the Sadducees' question about the resurrection (Matt. 22:28-30)
- e. Question #5 – “Can we be married in Heaven?”
 - i. **Answer** – No, there will be no marriage ceremony or marriage relationship in Heaven. This ends at the time of physical death (Cf. Romans 7:2-3; Matt. 22:28-30). All believers will be married to the Lamb.

VIII. **The Doctrine of Heaven: Keep Your Eyes on the Shorelines of Heaven**

- a. Psalm 73:25 – “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.”
 - i. Augustine – ***“God Himself, who is the Author of virtue, shall be our reward. As there is nothing greater or better than God Himself, God has promised us Himself. God shall be the end of all our desires, who will be seen without end, loved without cloy, and praised without weariness.”***
 - ii. John Donne – ***“I shall rise from the dead...I shall see the Son of God, the Sun of Glory, and shine myself as that sun shines. I shall be united to the Ancient of Days, to God Himself, who had no morning, never began...no man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not live till I see God; and when I have seen Him, I shall never die.”***

- I. **The Doctrine of Hell: *The Views of Hell***
- a. First, the Literal View (*My Personal View*)
 - i. The literal view holds that Hell is a place of eternal conscious torment and punishment with literal smokes and flames
 - b. Second, the Metaphorical View
 - i. The metaphorical view holds that Hell is a place of eternal conscious torment and punishment but not necessarily with literal smokes and flames
 - c. Third, the Purgatorial View
 - i. The purgatorial view holds that there is a place of temporal purification for all those who die at peace with the church but are not yet purified. These people will eventually inherit heaven after their purification. Those who die in mortal sin, go directly to eternal punishment after death (Hell)
 - d. Fourth, the Conditional View
 - i. The conditional view holds that the wicked begin in Hell, but eventually, God destroys the soul rather than punish them endlessly.
 - e. Fifth, the Annihilation View
 - i. The annihilation view states that after death non-believers are immediately annihilated, destroyed, snuffed out of existence
- II. **The Doctrine of Hell: *The Existence of Hell***
- a. First, Jesus taught the existence of Hell – some of the strongest assertions that there is a hell came from the Lord (He had more to say about hell than heaven)
 - i. **Mathew 25:41** – *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’”*
 - ii. **Mark 9:43** – *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched”*
 - b. Second, the Bible teaches that there is a Hell – not only does Jesus affirm the existence of hell, but other inspired writings of the New Testament also affirm hell’s existence
 - i. **Revelation 20:15** – *“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire”*
 - ii. **2 Thessalonians 1:9**–*“These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”*
 - c. Third, God’s Justice Demands a Hell – God is just, therefore, the existence of a place of punishment for the wicked after this life is necessary
 - i. God’s justice and righteousness makes hell a necessity because not every evil act is justly punished in this life
 - ii. In all actuality, God would be unjust if there was not a hell (to force one to enter heaven against their will would not be just)
 - d. Fourth, God’s Love Demands a Hell – the Bible teaches that God is love (1 John 4:16), but love cannot act forcefully, only persuasively
 - i. A God of love cannot force people to love him, therefore, those who do not choose to love God must be allowed not to love Him
 - ii. Those who do not wish to be with God must be allowed to be separated from God, and *hell allows separation from God* (Hell is away from the Presence of God – no relationship)
 - e. Fifth, the Cross of Christ implies a Hell – at the heart and center of Christianity is the Cross of Christ
 - i. The Lord Jesus suffered a brutal, terrible, excruciating death on the Cross of Calvary, but if Hell doesn’t exist, why the Cross and all its suffering?

- ii. Christ's death is robbed of its eternal value and significance unless there is a Hell from which people need to be delivered and saved from

III. The Doctrine of Hell: The Descriptions of Hell

- a. First, Hell is described as a place of Darkness
 - i. ***"But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*** Cf. Mathew 8:12
- b. Second, Hell is described as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth
 - i. ***"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*** Cf. Mathew 13:49-50
- c. Third, Hell is described as a Furnace of Fire
 - i. ***"And cast them into the furnace of fire..."*** Cf. Mathew 13:50a
- d. Fourth, Hell is described as an Eternal Fire
 - i. ***"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'"*** Cf. Mathew 25:41 (The Duration of Hell is Eternal – No Exit Signs)
- e. Fifth, Hell is described as an Unquenchable Fire
 - i. ***"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."*** Cf. Luke 3:17
- f. Sixth, Hell is described as a Bottomless Pit (Abyss)
 - i. ***"And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace..."*** Cf. Revelation 9:2a
- g. Seventh, Hell is described as a Place of Eternal Torment (no rest day or night)
 - i. ***"...He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night..."*** Cf. Revelation 14:10b-11a (The Duration of Hell is Eternal)
- h. Eighth, Hell is described as a Lake of Fire
 - i. ***"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*** Cf. Revelation 21:8

IV. The Doctrine of Hell: The Participants of Hell (Who will be in Hell?)

- a. First, the Devil
 - i. ***"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be torment day and night forever and ever"*** Cf. Revelation 20:10
- b. Second, Demons
 - i. ***"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;"*** Cf. 2 Peter 2:4
- c. Third, the Beast and the False Prophet
 - i. ***"Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone"*** Cf. Revelation 19:20

- d. Fourth, Judas Iscariot
 - i. “*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*” Cf. **John 17:12**
- e. Fifth, all those who refuse to receive Christ and His salvation (Non-believers)
 - i. “*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*” Cf. **Revelation 20:15**

V. **The Doctrine of Hell: Consciousness in Hell – Yes**

- a. People are conscious after they die, whether they are in heaven (Revelation 6:9-11) or in hell (Luke 16:19-31)
 - i. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, **cf. Luke 16:19-31**, we learn that the rich man was fully conscious in Hell and had full awareness of his own condition in Hell:
 - ii. The rich man was conscious of what he could have had (Abraham’s Bosom) **vs. 23-24**, his need for mercy (**vs. 24**), his torment (**vs. 24**), his memories of life while on earth (**vs. 25**), his five brothers (**vs. 28**), and his wrong decisions (**vs. 30**)
- b. Also, according to the book of Revelation, the beast and the false prophet were still conscious after a thousand years in the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:10)

VI. **The Doctrine of Hell: Common Questions concerning Hell**

- a. Question #1 – “Why doesn’t God just annihilate the wicked and put them out of their misery?”
Let’s look at a few responses:
 - i. A loving God doesn’t snuff out His enemies – it is not consistent with an all-loving God to snuff out those who do not do His wishes
 - ii. Were God to annihilate human beings He would be attacking Himself, for we are made in His *image*, and God is immortal
 - iii. For the same reason parents don’t kill their children because they didn’t meet their expectations and for the same reason we don’t kill people who are suffering, in pain, and miserable
- b. Question #2 – “How can God allow one to go to Hell eternally for temporal sins – Isn’t this overkill?” Let’s look at a few responses:
 - i. The one who asks this question forgets that temporal sins are against an eternal God. Only eternal punishment can suffice for sins against an eternal God. The punishment must fit the crime
 - ii. No sin can be tolerated as long as God exists, and He is eternal, therefore, punishment for sin must also be eternal
 - iii. Without an eternal separation there could be no eternal heaven. Evil is contagious and corruptive and must be eternally quarantined. Like a deadly plague, if it is not contained it will continue to contaminate and corrupt. The only way to have an eternal heaven is to have an eternal hell
- c. Question #3 – “It is not fair to send people to Hell who have not heard!” Let’s look at a few responses:
 - i. Yes, it would be unfair, however, there are no such persons. God has revealed Himself to everyone (John 1:9; Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 14:15-17). God has revealed Himself by: Creation and Conscience (General Revelation) and His Son and His Word (Special Revelation)
 - ii. If someone responds to the light of nature, conscience, or Scripture, they will be given more light. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. The soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will never miss it.

- d. Question #5 – “How can a God of justice, love, and compassion send people to Hell?” Let’s look at a few responses:
- i. God would be unjust if He did not allow man to have free choice in choosing where he wants to spend eternity. In other words, God would be unjust if there wasn’t a Hell. Should God force man to live with Him for eternity against their will? No!
 - ii. God doesn’t send people to Hell. Man decides to send Himself to Hell and God honors and confirms that decision
- e. Question #6 – “How can believers be happy in heaven knowing a loved one is in Hell?” Let’s look at a few responses:
- i. The same way we can be happy eating knowing others are starving, if we have tried to feed them but they have rejected the food
 - ii. The same way God can be happy in Heaven, and yet God is more merciful, loving, and compassionate than we are – “***Are we more merciful than God? Loving? Compassionate?***”
 - iii. Just as we have healing of bad memories on earth, God will wipe away all tears in heaven (Revelation 21:4)
 - iv. In heaven we will be free from the presence and influence of sin, thus, we shall have the right perspective on sin and our attitudes and feelings will be transformed and correspond more to God’s.