

Ultimate Question #5

Where am I going?

Intro: A wise old man is said to have struck a conversation with a light-hearted youth about his future. "What your plans?" He asked. The young lad replied energetically, "I am going to get an education". "And then what?" the old man asked. "I will get a job" And then what? "I'll get married, have a family and enjoy life." "And then what?" the old man further probed. "I will grow old and die," the lad said. But the last time he was brought to silence, "And then what?"

All too often we are like that young man. We think of today's needs and tomorrow's dreams. Our thoughts are centered in a new home, a new car, a fishing trip, a game of golf, a night on the town, success in business. Day by day our lives may pass with little thought of eternity; and then *"in the midst of our pursuits"* (Jas. 1:11) we will die. "And then what?"

Today I want to encourage you give careful thought to another "ultimate question"—"Where I am going?" Only God's word explores the life beyond this one with clarity and substance.

We are all going to the judgment seat of Christ.

All of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Cor. 5:10

Ac. 17:30-31

And then what? God's word places before us two eternal destinies one of which all must experience.

What are the possibilities?

To some it will be said, "Depart from me, you who work iniquity, I never knew you". Or, "Depart from me, you accursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:34). That place or condition of separation from God and spiritual death is called in Scripture "hell".
Hell

The Greek word translated "hell" is "Gehenna". This word is derived from the valley of the of the sons of Hinnom in Hebrew called "ge bene hinnon". It was a valley south of Jerusalem where the Canaanites and regrettably, some of the Israelites offered their infant children to the pagan God Molech in human sacrifice. In this place called "Tophet" they erected altars in the shape of a "god" with extended arms and built fires underneath and then laid their babies in that fire in sacrifice to that pagan god. The prophet Jeremiah told the Israelites that God would visit the horrors of that place upon the Jewish people: Jer. 19:1-13. The valley of Hinnom became the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Its fires continually burned the refuse of dead animals, criminals, and

garbage thrown there. It was the most repulsive place on earth to the Jews of Jerusalem! It became the symbol of the place of punishment for the wicked. Jesus appropriated the word to describe the place of judgment.

It is described as a place where both “soul and body” are destroyed (Mt. 10:28).

It is described as the place where its inhabitants are burning in eternal and unquenchable fire (Mt. 13:42; Mk. 9:48; Mt. 25:41; Rev. 21:8; Heb. 10:26-27)

It is a place of outer darkness, the blackest kind, void of all light (Mt. 8:11-12; Mt. 22:13; 25:30)

It is a place of corruption where the "worm", the maggot, does not die (Is. 66:24; Mk. 9:48)

It is a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt. 25:30; 24:51; 22:13) “Weeping” signifies “loud crying or wailing”.

While in the OT “gnashing teeth” is usually a figure of malicious taunting by the wicked on the righteous, now it is picture of the desperate hopelessness and agony of those who are lost.

Even so, such earthly pictures, as horrifying and repulsive as they may seem, are inadequate to describe the spiritual condition of those who "pay the penalty of everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power" (2 Thes. 1:9).

What will it be like to know that you could have been in heaven had you chosen to do so?

What will it be like to know that you are in the same place with the vilest and most wicked of men?

What will it be like to know that there is no end to this state of punishment and destruction?

Perhaps the closest we come in life to hell is that moment when we are farthest away from God. When we feel so alone and separated that we can't find our way back. When we've felt such despair and hopelessness that we didn't want to live any more. When we've felt the saddest or the most alone in our lives. These would only begin to awaken us to the misery of hell, the ultimate death experience (Rom. 6:23).

Hell, then, is the wages, the due penalty of a life of sin. It is the destiny of those who know not God and obey not the gospel. It is a fitting punishment for those who selfishly live by their own thinking rather give God the honor and respect He is due, who trample under foot the Son of God who died for them and regard the blood which he shed as an unclean thing. Surely, my friend, you do not want to go to such a place. And, thankfully, there is another way!

Heaven

Heaven is as wonderful as hell is horrible.

It is described in the word of God as an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and that fades not away (1 Pet. 1:3ff). It is pictured as a kingly palace with many rooms, prepared by Christ for its inhabitants (Jn. 14:1-3).

It is described as a beautiful city made of the most beautiful things known to man.

It is described as a place of perfect security, provision, protection, and fellowship (Rev. 21-22).

Its occupants are the righteous of the ages (Rev. 21:27).

They experience endless joy the service of the Father, whose face will be seen for the first time in history by man (Rev. 22:4-5).

Even such material pictures of heaven are inadequate to describe its beauty and glory.

And again, we must realize that there is a spiritual dimension.

What will it be like to really see God?

What will it be like to feel the great victory over sin and temptation?

What will it be like to be with the heroic characters whose examples have inspired our lives?

What will it be like to hear that heavenly chorus of voices praising God?

What will it be like to see those with whom you had the strongest bonds in this life and to know that you will never again be parted?

What will it be like to know that you will never suffer another pain?

Heaven is, no doubt, more wonderful than we can imagine.

Perhaps we might liken it to those experiences in life in which we have felt closest to God.

If you have caught a glimpse of the majesty of the Almighty in the creation around you and in the profound reverence of that moment said, "How great Thou art", you know something about what heaven is like.

If you have read the gospel of the Son of God and shed tears of gratitude for His sacrificial love, then you know what a joy it will be to see Jesus and express your love to Him.

If you have enjoyed the warmth of Christian friends who really care and in whose presence you always delight, you know in part what it will be like when all the saved reunite.

If you have sung hymns to God with fellow-saints until your voice was weak and the hour was late and you wanted to sing more, you are suited for a place where His servants will praise Him ever more.

If you have willingly obeyed in Him and felt the satisfaction of knowing that He was pleased with you, then you are prepared to serve Him day and night in His temple.

**Heaven is for those who have “washed their robes” (Rev. 22:14).
It is for those “who in doing good seek for glory, honor and
immortality” (Rom. 2)**

Conclusion: Only the Bible can give us an accurate glimpse of what the future holds for those creatures God has made. The light of the skeptic goes out where he needs it most. Some of greatest unbelievers have entered that realm not in the confidence of unbelief but in the fear that there might be more. “God, if there be a god, save my soul, if I have a soul from death”.

In contrast, the psalmist could sing, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me”. We hear the confidence in the voice of apostle Paul who wrote, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, hence forth, there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give to me; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing.

And so, if you today have not thought much about the life beyond, think soberly about it. Turn to God and His word today. Learn about Jesus and obey His gospel so that every wonderful blessing can be yours; so that even now you can sing, *"Earth holds no treasures but perish with using, however precious they be; but there's a country to which I am going. Heaven holds all to me"*.