



What We Believe

Article 13 of 13: The Restoration of All Things

The Restoration of All Things: We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy angels, when He will exercise His role as final Judge, and His kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord Himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of Him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and His people will be enthralled by the immediacy of His ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of His glorious grace.

With the final article of our statement of faith, we arrive at our final destination in God's redemptive plan and the final facet of the theological framework we have been mentioning, that of Creation-Fall-Redemption and now Restoration. The restoration of all things.

As we begin to focus the restoration of all things, we come to the topic of final things or eschatology. Eschatology encompasses much more than the Second Coming, the rapture, or the end of this particular age. It also encompasses the topics of the resurrection, the judgment, of heaven and hell, and the consummation of this created order and then the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

You may have noticed when reading the statement above that although it is dealing with final things, it doesn't specify a particular millennial view or a particular view on the rapture. This has been the case with most of the major creeds and confessions in church history. Although most of the major historical church groups have held to one or another of the millennial views, they for the most part have not included dogmatic statements on this in their confessions. Rather, they have emphasized the event of Christ's literal second coming, the judgment of the just and the unjust, the passing away of these heavens and earth, the creation of the new heavens and earth, and eternity. This has been considered orthodoxy throughout church history. So also, our statement of faith like most historical statements, emphasizes these important events, as it opens up with the Second Coming the personal, glorious, bodily return of Jesus. Before we cover the Second Coming, resurrection, and millennial views, etc., an overview of the topics of heaven, sheol/hades and the intermediate state would be helpful.

Heaven and the Intermediate State

The Hebrew word usually translated "heaven" is *shamayim*, a plural form that literally means "the heights." The Greek word translated "heaven" is *ouranos*, referring to things that are raised up or lofty, sky or air. The word heaven is used in few different ways:

It is sometimes used to refer to salvation

Concerning the use of the word heaven and its relationship to salvation, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling" 2 Corinthians 5:1, 2

"Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. . ." Phil. 3:20

The Apostle Peter wrote:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5

It can be used in reference to God Himself

This can be seen in verses like Matthew 23:22 where Jesus says, "He who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it." And in Luke 15:18 where the repentant prodigal says, "I have sinned against heaven". In article 10, "The Kingdom of God" we developed the fact that the Scriptures use the terms kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God synonymously. John MacArthur said:

"When the writers of Scripture speak of the Kingdom of Heaven, they are actually referring to the Kingdom of God. Particularly during the Intertestamental Period, the 400 years between the events of the Old Testament and the New, the Jewish people developed a fear of using God's name. They didn't like using the covenant name of God (Yahweh or Jehovah), because they thought it was too holy to pass through their lips. So they began substituting things for the name of God, and "heaven" became a common substitute. By New Testament times that practice was so ingrained that the Jewish people understood any reference to the Kingdom of Heaven as a reference to the Kingdom of God."

[MacArthur, Heaven, Online Pamphlet](#)

It can refer to our atmosphere

The Bible says of Noah's flood, "the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.", Genesis 7:11-12. In Psalm 147, it says, "He covers the heavens with clouds", Psalm 147:8.

It can refer to the planetary heavens

The Biblical words for heaven can also refer to the planetary heavens, what we commonly call space. In Genesis 1 we read:

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth." Genesis 1:14-17

The words for heaven also refer to the third heaven, the abode of God

What is the third heaven like? In Scripture we find various comments and descriptions of the third heaven:

". . . I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple." Isaiah 6:1
"Thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on a high and holy place." Isaiah 57:15
"Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation." Isaiah 63:15
"Heaven is my throne." Isaiah 66:1
Jesus - "has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God." 1 Peter 3:22

We know that God is "omnipresent", but it is in heaven on His throne that most glory. We find the actual 2 Corinthians 12:2, where the Apostle heavenly visitation and the greatness



that is He is present everywhere, His presence is manifest in phrase third heaven in Paul speaks of his special the revelation of it:

"Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations" 2 Corinthians 12:2-7

Where is Heaven?

Ever wonder where heaven is exactly? We seem to act as though it is always directly above us.

But where is it? Is it just beyond the edge of space? Is it another dimension?

John MacArthur said:

“Heaven is not limited by the normal boundaries of time and space. Scripture clearly teaches that heaven is a real place that can be seen and touched and inhabited by beings with material bodies. We affirm that truth unequivocally. But Scripture also reveals heaven as a realm not confined to an area delimited by height, width, and breadth. Heaven seems to span all those dimensions and more.”

MacArthur, Heaven, Online Pamphlet

Heaven is a realm or place not limited by finite boundaries of time or space. We see from these Scriptures and quotations that the third heaven is indeed a place, it is a holy and glorious place, the heaven of heavens, where God's will is perfectly done, and full of His presence and majesty.

The Intermediate State - Heaven as a Temporary Abode of Believers

Lastly, heaven is also used to describe the temporary abode and intermediate state of believers who have died physically but who are awaiting the resurrection. As an Intermediate State, the Apostle Paul spoke of it as being, "Absent from the body and present with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

There seems to be some confusion among believers about this intermediate state in heaven.

First, humans never become angels and never receive wings as popular cultural religion seems to promote. When a Christian dies physically and becomes absent from his physical body, the Apostle Paul wrote of being immediately present with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8

Since, there is no such place a purgatory, a believer at death becomes immediately present with Christ in a spirit/soul immaterial existence. It is important for us to keep in mind that Christ's atoning death for us is all-sufficient. From the eternal perspective, He has paid our sin-debt, it is cleared and no guilt remains on us for us to purge through our own sufferings in some purgatory. This is the invention of man centered religion. Walter Elwell wrote:

“Christianity postulates that there will be a resurrection of the body at the end of the age. Because many people physically die before that time, in what state of being do they exist until that time? That state of being is called an "intermediate state" because it stands between our state of being while alive on earth and our final state of being that will include a resurrected body. The apostle Paul looks forward to being with Christ upon death (Phil 1:20-24) . . . To Paul, those who die in Christ go immediately into Christ's presence in a non complete (unresurrected) form . . . When reflecting on what it will be like to be in that interim state between death and resurrection, Paul likens it to being unclothed. The soul has shed its body and is naked (2 Cor. 5:3-4). . . Paul does not attempt to describe what the disembodied soul is like; he only knows it is a temporary state. At the resurrection of the dead we will be made complete again, like Christ in his resurrected body.”

Walter A. Elwell, Intermediate State, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

Some think that this immaterial spiritual existence is all there is, yet the Bible teaches that it is God's plan that people's soul/spirit be reunited with their renewed resurrected bodies which will be fit for eternity and we will look into this further below. So, God's people experience a temporary spiritual/immaterial existence with Christ, apart from their physical body until resurrection day, then the soul/spirit will be reunited with the body.

Are those in heaven aware of what's going on earth?

Some believe that our Christian loved ones who have passed on can see us from heaven. They look to Hebrews 12:1 for this, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us . . . run with endurance the race that is set before us.", and say it means our departed loved ones watch us like spectators do in a stadium, seeing our actions here on earth and cheering us on. While this may seem either comforting or embarrassing to us, it is not likely the passage is really teaching that. MacArthur has said:

“The witnesses in that verse are not modern-day loved ones, but the faithful saints in Hebrews 11 who lived victorious lives by trusting God. Those saints are witnesses to us because their lives testify about the value of trusting God no matter what hardships we face. They are active witnesses who speak to us by their example; not passive witnesses who watch us with their eyes.

Consequently, when we understand Hebrews 12:1 in its context, we realize that it doesn't really support the idea that our loved ones are watching us from heaven. Our comfort comes not from knowing they can see us, but that they can see Jesus and one day we will see Him with them as well-never to be separated again.” [Grace to You, Do Those in Heaven Know What is Happening on Earth?](#)

Although it may be remotely possible that our departed Christian loved ones know of our well being, we do not know from Scripture. It is reasonable to think that they would remember those of us who they knew while they were here on earth, and it is reasonable to think that they have met those who preceded them there from previous generations, but they are fully focused and occupied with their experience and worship in presence of Jesus. These are only possibilities.

Sheol and Hades

The concepts of sheol, hades developed over time in the OT and NT.

Let's take a few moments to explore these words and their meanings.

Sheol – This Hebrew word describes the abode of the dead. The underworld, grave, pit. It was seen as a place of no return, the wicked were sent there for punishment, but the righteous would not be abandoned to it ultimately.



Hades - It describes the nether world, the realm of the dead. The later use of the word developed into : the grave, death, the temporary state of the lost dead. Hades is place of suffering and lament for the lost. This is a temporary existence or intermediate state for the lost in which, the soul/spirit of the lost are kept until judgment day, when they will be bodily resurrected to face judgment and eternal condemnation. Hades is the place referred to in the passage Luke 16:23 and the account of Lazarus the beggar and the rich man and the phrase "bosom of Abraham". The text suggests a two compartment existence in hades before Christ's resurrection, one compartment of suffering for the wicked and one of rest for the righteous awaiting deliverance, separated by a large chasm.

Jesus promised that the gates of hades would not prevail against the church. Matthew 16:18

Well, now that we have done a quick overview of heaven, sheol/hades and the intermediate state, let's proceed on to our statement of faith.

Our statement opens up with the second coming, the glorious, personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy angels, when He will exercise His role as final Judge, and His kingdom will be consummated."

What a tremendous event that will be! Can you imagine how momentous, how awesome, how wonderful for believers? But can you imagine what an incredibly terrifying day that will be for His enemies?

At CrossLife Community Church we strive to a careful approach to eschatology, the study of final things. It seems that too many in church history, especially the modern church have run wild with speculation on this topic. Some even doing what Jesus had forbidden, predicting dates, which only works to upset believers and fuel criticism from outsiders. It is important we realize that some facets of eschatology are not revealed as clearly in the Bible as are the doctrines of God, of Christ, of Salvation, and of the Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture, etc. So, we really must be patient, cautious and humble when it comes to things like the millennial views and with the various views of the timing of the rapture. We will touch on these questions in this article, but our main focus will be on what our statement of faith emphasizes.

The Promise of the Second Coming

In Acts 1, we have the account of Jesus' ascension, and then the words of the two angelic beings as they addressed the disciples about His return:

"So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Acts 1:6-11

In Revelation 20, the millennium is revealed:

“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”
Revelation 20:4-6

Historically, there have been three main views on the millennium, premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.

They came to life and reigned with
Christ for a thousand years.
Revelation 20:4

Some History

According to the R.J. Bauckham in his article in the New Dictionary of Theology, it can be argued from history that the premillennial view is the most ancient, with several of the earliest church fathers as adherents, such as Papias, 130 AD, Justin Martyr, 100-165 AD, Irenaeus, 130-202 AD, and Tertullian, 160-225 AD. In Premillennialism there have been two major positions, the Historic Premillennial view and the Dispensational Premillennial view, the latter developing into a system beginning in the 19th century has come to be the most popular view amongst English speaking Evangelicals, and continues to be held in various forms up until our times.

Amillennialism is the next most ancient view, developed mainly early on by Augustine in the 4th Century. Amillennialism is likely the majority view throughout church history. Then comes Postmillennialism stemming from the 12th century. By the 16th Century it became a major alternative to Amillennialism, being embraced by many Puritans and some Presbyterian and Reformed believers. It reached its zenith in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Although Amillennialism has been the most popular view throughout church history, Premillennialism has become very popular since the 19th and 20th centuries.

All three views have their strengths and weaknesses and continue to be held by various groups in our times. CrossLife Community Church has not yet officially embraced one view over another, in fact, we have people who believe at least the Premillennial and Amillennial viewpoints. Let's briefly describe each of these major views.

Premillennialism: The Second Coming is before the millennium, e.g. pre - millennium. Christ returns in power and glory, raises the saints from the dead, raptures/transforms the living saints, conquers the wicked, casts the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire and binds Satan and sets up His 1,000 year reign from earth. Some insist that this is exactly 1,000 years and some do not insist on this because of the repeated use of symbolism in Revelation. After this, Satan is released for a brief time, but then thrown into the lake of fire. The unrighteous are raised from the dead, judged, condemned cast into the lake of fire. MacArthur has described this view:

“Christ will come before, preceding the Kingdom. Christ comes in person, visibly, publicly at the end of God's wrath and judgment on the world to set up the Kingdom. At that time Satan is bound for a literal thousand-year Kingdom. The Kingdom is set up on earth in the city of Jerusalem on the throne of David.”
John MacArthur, The Coming Earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, Sermon

Amillennialism: Christ and the saints are ruling and reigning during this age. Christ will return at the end of this period, resurrect and judge the just and the unjust. Although the Latin prefix “a” means “no”, technically no-millennium, those who hold this view really believe in what is called a “realized millennium”. Sam Storms wrote:

“Contrary to what the name (Amillennialism) implies, AMs do believe in a millennium. The millennium, however, is now: the present age of the church between the first and second comings of Christ in its entirety is the millennium. . . However, this messianic reign is not necessarily for a literal

1,000 years and it is wholly spiritual (non-earthly, non-visible) in nature. "This millennial reign is not something to be looked for in the future;" writes Hoekema, "it is going on now, and will be until Christ returns. Hence the term realized millennialism is an apt description of the view here defended" (The Bible and the Future, p. 235). Sam Storms, The Amillennial View of the Kingdom of God

According to Storms, the return of Christ happens after the thousand-year reign, a reign that occurs in heaven, in the intermediate state, and not upon the earth. Those who have died in faith and entered into the presence of Christ share his rule and reign during the current church age in which we now live. Storms, An Evening of Eschatology, desiringgod.org

Postmillennialism: The millennium is a glory age of the Gospel in which the nations will be converted to Christ. Christ's will return at the end of the millennium. Lorraine Boettner wrote:

"We have defined Postmillennialism as that view of the last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the 'Millennium.' . . . the second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness. The Millennium to which the Postmillennialist looks forward is thus a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church age, . . . It is an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps much longer than a literal one thousand years. This does not mean that there ever will be a time on this earth when every person will be a Christian, or that all sin will be abolished. But it does mean that evil in all its many forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and that Christ will return to a truly Christianized world,"

Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, p. 14

The Rapture

The Rapture is the popular term used to describe an important event tied to the Lord's return found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The word "rapture" comes from the Latin *rapere* used by the Vulgate version to translate the Greek word *harpazo*, which is translated "caught up" in most English translations. The rapture can also be referred to with such phrases as, the "catching away" or "snatching away" of the church.

When we look at Scripture, we find the main passages that deal most directly with the rapture are: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2

"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."
1 Corinthians 15:51-52

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."
Philippians 3:20-21

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."
1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

"Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." 2 Thess. 2:1, 2

The popularity of the topic of the rapture began to rise beginning from around 1830's or so with the rise of an interpretive approach known as Dispensationalism, popularized in England by J.N. Darby and others, and then by C.I. Scofield here in the U.S., and has continued on until our times. Other prophecy movements also stem from that time frame. Over the years various views on the timing of the rapture have come and gone in popularity, but the most popular view in the modern English speaking church has been the pre-tribulation view. Other views are known as partial-rapture, mid-tribulation, post-tribulation, and pre-wrath rapture. All of these views are named in relationship to what is called the great tribulation period, a time of unprecedented turmoil and suffering, developed from Daniel 9, what is known as the Seventy Weeks of Daniel, particularly the seventieth week.

The Major Views of the Rapture

Pre-tribulational: Christ raptures His church before the tribulation period. This view sees the great tribulation as a time when God begins to deal with Israel as a nation once again and as a time of the wrath of God. Christians are not appointed unto wrath. 1 Thess. 5:9

Partial-Rapture: Only the more spiritual Christians who are watching and waiting for Christ's return will be taken in the rapture.

Mid-Tribulational: Christ raptures His church in the middle of the tribulation period, Rev. 11:18

Post-Tribulational: Christ raptures His church at the end of the tribulation period, Matt. 24:29-31

Pre-Wrath: Christ raptures His church at some point towards the end of the tribulation period before the wrath of God is poured out in the seventh bowls of wrath, Rev. 16:19

At CrossLife, just like with the millennial question, we likely have varying views on the timing of the rapture. It is probably true to say that the case for any of the views on this is a circumstantial one. However, as we look at the two clearest passages having to do with this event, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52, we see that the rapture is a stage or a part of the resurrection of believers. So, if we are able to pin down when that is, we know that the rapture occurs immediately afterwards. The rapture is part of the resurrection and we will look at it in more detail below.

So then, regarding the timing of the rapture, whether pre, mid, post, or pre-wrath or of the varying millennial views, Premillennial, Amillennial or Postmillennial, CrossLife Community Church has not taken a dogmatic position.

What we do hold to dogmatically however, is the biblical and steadfast conviction in the personal, glorious bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, to bring in righteousness and to judge the living and the dead, the just and the unjust, and we patiently await the Lord's fulfillment of His Word.

One very important thing to keep in mind concerning these issues of the end times however, is that it has been said that nearly every if not all NT texts that deals with the subject of the end time, also exhorts believers unto readiness, faithfulness and holiness in awaiting our Lord's return.

The Apostle Paul having written the Thessalonians concerning the gathering together unto Christ, exhorted them to "watch and be sober" in 1 Thess. 5:6-11 and to "stand fast" and hold to what they had been taught. 2 Thess. 2:15. At the end of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul having written the most comprehensive treatise on the resurrection in the Bible, exhorted them:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:58

The Apostle Peter likewise exhorted believers:

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" 1 Peter 1:13-16

This is and should be our attitude towards the doctrine of final things.

The Resurrection

"We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord Himself taught"

Humans will have Consciousness into Eternity

Humans are eternal beings, but in a different way than God. One of God's attributes is His eternalness. If we were try to characterize the difference between God's eternalness and human eternalness we could say, that God is eternal in two directions. He has always existed from eternity past and will always exist in the future for eternity. Humans however are contingent beings, meaning we are dependent on God and have a beginning. Humans possess eternalness only into the future.

That's right, all humans, just or unjust, saved or lost will have a conscious existence on into eternity. The redeemed have "eternal life", the lost will experience "eternal death". As we have mentioned in previous articles, physical life is only a part of the overall concept of life and physical death is only part of the overall concept of death. Physical death does not equal unconsciousness. Physical death is a temporary separation from the body. As noted earlier, this is an intermediate state, between the end of this life and the resurrection. Every human being will experience conscious existence for eternity. As we shall see, everyone, saved or lost will be raised from the dead to spend eternity either with God or separated from Him.

Bodily Resurrection

The bodily resurrection is an essential Biblical and Gospel doctrine. Some, throughout history and even in our modern times have attempted to spiritualize away the physical resurrection of the body. At CrossLife Community Church we hold to the real, literal, and physical resurrection of the body at the coming our Lord Jesus Christ. Can you imagine, what a glorious day that will be when, at God's command, graves all around the world, whether earthy or watery, will open up and the bodies of the dead in Christ, will be raised, their spirits reunited with their transformed bodies, no matter how long they have laid in the grave, no matter how decomposed, they will be raised and restored incorruptible? In similar fashion the graves of the lost open up but instead will be raised up unto judgment and condemnation and casting into the lake of fire forever and ever?



The Nature of the Resurrection Body

The Apostle Paul wrote the following in 1 Corinthians 15:35ff:

“But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” . . . But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:38, 44, 53

Then in Philippians he wrote asserting that the resurrection body will be our same body transformed and made like Christ's resurrection body:

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" Phil. 3:20, 21

The Apostle John wrote similarly:

"... we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3:2

So we see by these passages, that our current bodies will be raised as spiritual bodies, imperishable, and immortal. These physical glorified bodies will like Jesus' own glorified body, with probably one distinction. He still bears the scars of the physical wounds endured at the cross. This will be like a reminder of His sufferings to us His people. Our glorified bodies will likely not show any physical defects. What a wonderful hope for those who have suffered terrible illness, or injury where they have lost limbs, or those who were born with serious birth defects. These new glorified bodies will be fit for eternity and the new heavens and new earth. They will be supernatural bodies, not subject to sin, to illness, to injury.

However, the resurrection bodies of the lost and unrepentant will be fit for eternal judgment, wrath and suffering. They will endure for eternity the full, unending wrath of God, in eternal fire and outer darkness. What an odious destiny and eternity indeed. All praise, honor and glory to God as He has spared His people such a horrible future.

It should be noted here that the various millennial views have some differences in chronology concerning the timing of the rapture/resurrection of Christians, the resurrection of OT Saints and of the lost. Some pre-mils place the resurrection of Christians first, followed immediately by the rapture or catching-away of living believers before the tribulation. They place the resurrection of OT believers at the end of the tribulation and then the lost are resurrected at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. The amil and post-mil views look to one general resurrection at the end of the millennium.

The Final Enemy Conquered

In 1 Corinthians, the premier passage on the nature of the resurrection, the Apostle Paul identified and described the victory over the last enemy, namely, death:

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” 1 Corinthians 15:26

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

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

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

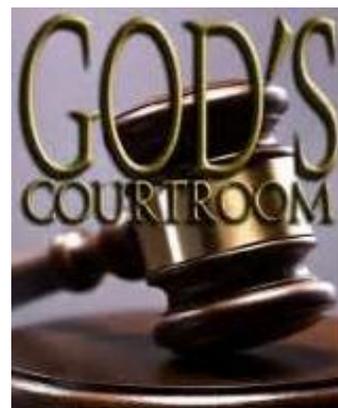
Death has plagued humanity and the created order since the fall. Jesus conquered death by His victorious resurrection, and will raise and glorify us victorious on resurrection day. He declared:

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:37-40

We echo the Apostle Paul's joyous expression of thanks as he wrote, "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15:57

Judgment Day

On judgment day, everyone will be judged and no one will have any excuse as to God's existence and righteous attributes, Rom. 1:20, 21. Those who hold to the various millennial views also see some differences in chronology concerning the judgment of Christians, OT Saints and the lost as they do with the timing of the resurrection.



Concerning our attitude about God's judgment John Piper said:

“The third reason I preach on judgment is that it reveals part of God's character and so helps us love him for who he is. If hearing about God's judgment makes it harder for us to love God, then probably the God we love is a figment of our imagination and not the real and true God. If we would love the true God, we must know the true God. There is something wrong with our faith if we cannot sing praises to God not only as our loving Father but also as the righteous Judge of all the earth.”

John Piper, Final Judgment, Sermon

Just a couple of the many Scriptures that warn of judgment day are:

“God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:31

“It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

In the end, everyone, just and unjust, will face God the righteous judge for judgment. We need to recognize, though, that there will be a significant difference between the judgment of believers and that of unbelievers. Believers will not face God's judgment as regards salvation or eternal life. We already have that in Christ. When we were justified by grace through faith our eternal legal standing with God was changed. We were declared, “Not Guilty” and also declared “Righteous”. That fact for true believers never changes. Jesus said that those who hear his word and believe have eternal life and does not come into judgment, in the sense of condemnation, John 5:24.

The Apostle Paul reassured the believers in Rome, that there therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1. The type of judgment believers will receive will be of the things done in the kingdom of God, while in the earthly body. The Apostle Paul explained this in 1 Corinthians 3:

“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”
1 Corinthians 3: 10-15

Paul also touched upon the judgment of believers in 2 Corinthians 5:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." 2 Corinthians 5:10

Concerning rewards for believers Paul wrote,

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing"
2 Timothy 4:8

Unbelievers, on the other hand will be justly judged and condemned to eternal punishment under the wrath of God and judged according to what they have done. In Revelation 20, we have a graphic description of judgment day.

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."
Revelation 20:11-15

Regarding the judgment of lost, the Apostle Paul commented:

“but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil,”
Romans 2:8, 9

Hell and the Lake of Fire

The concept of hell and the lake of fire is very unsettling. It seems so harsh, such a fearful thing to the human mind. John Piper said the following in a sermon on hell:

"It is a profound and dreadful reality. To speak of it lightly, or not to speak of it at all, or to speak of it in a way that changes suffering into feeling nothing, simply proves that we do not grasp its horror. I know of no one who has overstated the terrors of hell. We can scarcely surpass the horrid images Jesus used. 'Weeping and gnashing of teeth,'⁴ 'their worm shall not die' (Mark 9:48); 'unquenchable fire' (Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:43); 'eternal fire' (Matthew 25:41); 'the hell of fire' (Matthew 18:9); 'eternal punishment' (Matthew 25:46); 'anguish in the flame' (Luke 16:24). The point of all these is that we are meant to shudder. We are meant to tremble and feel dread. We are meant to recoil from the reality. Not by denying it but by fleeing from it into the arms of Jesus, who died to save us from it. Revelation 14:11 is probably the most graphic New Testament statement of the eternal suffering of the unrepentant. 'The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.' Torment forever and ever. The endless suffering of unrepentant sinners is a reality taught in Scripture and therefore good for us to know about."

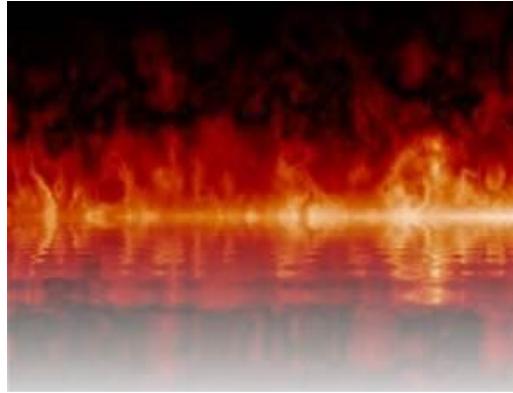
John Piper, The Echo and Insufficiency of Hell

The following is a summary of the Biblical words used to describe this terrible place.

Hell - The concept of hell is described in Scripture by the words "gehenna" and "tartarus" and the phrase "lake of fire".

Gehenna - this is the most commonly used word for hell, 12 times in the ESV, 11 in the synoptic Gospels and once in James. It is the place of the future punishment call "gehenna" or "gehenna of fire". This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.

Tartarus or Tartaroo - the subterranean region, doleful the ancient Greeks as the dead, where they suffer punishment. It is used only once in did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed darkness, reserved for



name of the and dark, regarded by abode of the wicked ment for their evil 2 Peter 2:4 "For if God they sinned, but cast them to pits of judgment"

The Lake of Fire – This is a burning fire, where the worm described as outer darkness,

real place, of eternal never dies. It is and is described as a

lake that burns with fire and sulfur, and is called the “second death”. The lost will be physically resurrected and cast into the lake of fire. The phrase only found 3 times in the ESV in Rev. 19 and 20, referring to it as the place where the devil, the beast and the false prophet would be cast. Death and hades will also be cast there, ultimately anyone whose name was not written in the book of life.

These words and the symbolism used for hell and the lake of fire describe what is in reality even worse than the symbols portraying them. What a terrible, terrible fate for the lost!

As we begin to try to fathom the horror that hell will be, let us, as those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ take great comfort in that fact that He bore our sin, purchased us and reconciled us to God and we are no long under the wrath and condemnation of God. In our modern times, hell has become very unfavorable, even unimaginable to many.

Pastor J.D. Greear has written:

“Hell is what hell is because God is who God is.

God tells us about hell to demonstrate to us the magnitude of His holiness. Hell is what hell is because the holiness of God is what it is. Hell is not one degree hotter than our sin demands that it be. Hell should make our mouths stand agape at the righteous and just holiness of God. It should make us tremble before His majesty and grandeur.

Jesus spoke about hell more than anyone else in Scripture.

When you start reading the gospels, you find that Jesus speaks about hell more than anyone else. In fact, if you count up the verses, Jesus spoke more about hell than he did about heaven.

The reality of hell shows us the extent of God’s love in saving us.

The worst part was the separation from the Father that Jesus felt, a separation that was *hell itself*. “*My God, My God,*” he cried out, “*Why have you forsaken me*” (Matt 27:46)? In all of this, Jesus was taking the hell of our sin into His body. People often feel that hell is some great blemish on God’s love. The Bible presents it as the opposite. Hell magnifies for us the love of God by showing us how far God went, and how much he went through, to save us.

In one sense, God doesn’t send anyone to hell, yet in another sense God does send people to hell. All His ways are true and righteous altogether. C. S. Lewis put it this way:

“*In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: ‘What are you asking God to do?’ . . . To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does. . . . In the end, there are only two kinds of people— those who say to God “thy will be done” and those to whom God says in the end ‘thy will be done.’”*

We may be tempted to rage at God and to correct him. But how can we find fault with God? As Paul says in Romans, who are we—as mere lumps of clay—to answer back to the divine Potter? Rom. 9:20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath

and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? Romans 9:20-24

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. . . The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.” Psalm 145 [JD Greear, The Doctrine of Hell, Weblog article](#)

Currently, when a lost person dies, they do not enter directly into hell. Hell is the permanent destination of the lost. We mentioned earlier the concept of the "intermediate state", and for the lost this intermediate state is what the Bible calls "sheol" in the OT and "hades" in the NT. This intermediate state in sheol/hades is not a pleasant experience, but a temporary experience in which the soul/spirit of the lost person suffers hell like punishment in anticipation of hell, the lake of fire. It can be said that the main difference between sheol/hades and hell/lake of fire is that the sheol/hades experience is of the soul/spirit and is temporary and the hell/lake of fire experience is in a resurrected body and is final. Hell and the lake of fire is the second death. It is final and irreversible.

Let's face it, hell and the lake of fire are awful and terrible concepts for us to fathom. God does not delight in the death and condemnation of the wicked, Ezekiel 33:11. On the contrary, He loved humanity so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone believing in Him should not perish, but have eternal life, John 3:16. At the end of John chapter 3, John wrote:

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. John 3:36

That being said, God is just and right in visiting the unrepentant wicked with His wrath in eternal punishment. The Apostle Paul wrote:

"since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. . ." 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

New Heavens and New Earth

In our statement it says concerning the new heavens and new earth:

“the just will go to eternal blessedness in the presence of Him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness.”

The Apostle Peter wrote:

"But the day of the Lord then the heavens will pass heavenly bodies will be the earth and the be exposed. Since all dissolved, what sort of lives of holiness and hastening the coming of which the heavens will and the heavenly bodies according to his promise



heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." 2 Peter 3:10

will come like a thief, and away with a roar, and the burned up and dissolved, and works that are done on it will these things are thus to be people ought you to be in godliness, waiting for and the day of God, because of be set on fire and dissolved, will melt as they burn! But we are waiting for new

In Revelation 21 we see the glorious fulfillment of the new heaven and new earth:

"Then 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. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And 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. He 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." And 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." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Revelation 21:1-6

First, we see that it will be a place of eternal blessedness. Next, that it will be a place where our Triune God Himself will be present with His people in a personal and special way, personally caring for each of us, wiping away every tear. It will be a place of abundant life and peace and joy, no more death, no mourning, crying or pain. It will be a home of righteousness. MacArthur commented from Revelation 3 and 21, on eternity as revealed as a new Jerusalem coming down from heaven and magnificent kingdom in which heaven and earth unite in a glory surpassing the ability our imaginations:

In Christ's message to the Philadelphian church, for example, He speaks of the eternal realm as "New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God" (Rev. 3:12). In the closing chapters of Scripture, the apostle John speaks of "the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:10).

The New heaven and New Earth are seen blending together in a great kingdom that incorporates both realms. The paradise of eternity is thus revealed as a magnificent kingdom where both heaven and earth unite in a glory that surpasses the limits of the human imagination and the boundaries of earthly dimensions.

John MacArthur, Where is Heaven?

An article on the new heavens and earth in Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology states:

"The idea of new heavens and a new earth is explicitly noted in Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1. The Old Testament has no term that directly translates as "universe"; the phrase "heavens and earth" was the Hebrew way of referring to the universe they knew. This imagery is set in prophetic-apocalyptic texts that hold forth future hope for a redeemed world that transcends the sinful world we know. The world God originally created suffered the catastrophe of sin and all of its consequences but the future new world will be a perfect world in which the effects of sin are no longer present. The concept of new things is a major motif in redemptive history, especially in eschatological passages. The new heavens and earth in Revelation 21 is the consummation of many new things. The crescendo for redemptive history is stated in verse 5, "everything new!"

The manner in which the new heavens and earth come into existence is a matter of debate among biblical scholars. . . . Therefore, the question of the nature of bringing the new heavens and earth into existence is in regard to whether the new creation comes into existence by means of renewal (a renovation of the old) or replacement (a totally new act of creation). Such a question may be more influenced by our modern scientific curiosity than by textual indicators. The apostle John was more impressed with the fact and nature of the new order than by how it will come about."

For the details of the renewal vs. replacement views of the new heavens and new earth see the online article, Gary T. Meadows, New Heavens and New Earth, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

Well, whether the Lord completely replaces this old order or significantly renovates it, it will be a beautiful and wonderful new created order in which to spend eternity with Him.

The statement brings the topic of the restoration of all things to a close with these words:

"Then we will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. We will be totally occupied and satisfied with God, and everything will be to the praise of His glorious grace."

Jesus returns victoriously, literally, personally, in power and great glory with ten thousands of His risen saints. He conquers all His foes, judges the just and the unjust, presents His people faultless from the effects of sin by His redemptive obedience, suffering and victory. Redemption accomplished, applied and now fully realized. He casts the wicked into perdition and with all rebellion dealt with, the current heavens and earth pass with fervent heat and the new heavens and new earth are established. He will have brought about the full restoration of all things, (1 Cor. 15:27, 28; Eph. 1:5-10; Col. 1:20). Then, glory to God alone, we as His people will be totally occupied and fully satisfied in the presence of our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Perfect harmony, perfect happiness and eternal joy. No more tears, no more sorrows, no more suffering, but an eternity together in worship and devotion to our great Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer to the praise of His glorious and amazing grace. Amen.

Crown Him With Many Crowns

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne,
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing, who died, and rose on high,
who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of peace, whose power a scepter sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease, and all be prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end, and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of love; behold his hands and side,
those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.

Lyrics by Matthew Bridges, Godfrey Thring

Bibliography & Resources:

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Heaven, p 499-500 , Hell, p 506; Millennial Views, p 714-718
Lorraine Boettner, The Millennium, p. 14
Louis Berkhof, Resurrection of the Dead, Systematic Theology, p 720-727
Final Judgment, Systematic Theology, p 728-734
R.J. Bauckham, New Dictionary of Theology, Millennium, p 428-429
Wayne Grudem, Glorification (Resurrection), Systematic Theology, p 828-836
The Return of Christ, Systematic Theology, p 1091-1106
The Millennium, Systematic Theology, p 1109-1139
Final Judgment, Eternal Punishment, Systematic Theology, p 1140-1157
The New Heavens and New Earth, Systematic Theology, p 1148-1166

Free Online Resources:

[An Evening of Eschatology - \(Major Views discussed\), desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org)
[Gary T. Meadors, New Heavens and New Earth, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology](#)
[Grace to You, Do Those in Heaven Know What is Happening on Earth?](#)
[J.D Greear – The Doctrine of Hell](#)
[John Piper, The Echo and Insufficiency of Hell](#)
[John Piper, Final Judgment, Sermon](#)
[John MacArthur, Heaven, Online Pamphlet](#)
[John MacArthur, What is Heaven? Online Video](#)
[John MacArthur, The Coming Earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ](#)
[John MacArthur, Where is Heaven?](#)
[R.W. Glenn, Heaven and Hell, The Truth About the Afterlife, 5 sermons](#)
[R.W. Glenn, Systems of Theology – Series](#)
[Sam Storms, The Amillennial View of the Kingdom of God](#)
[Timothy R. Phillips, Hell, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology](#)
[Walter A. Elwell, Intermediate State, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology](#)