

## The Ultimate End

With today's message, we are at the end of our series of messages on systematic theology. As we consider theology in a systematic way, it forms a thesis, or dissertation, or commentary on God's relation to man. One of the questions an amateur philosopher asked one of our teens was how this ancient document, the Bible, is relevant to us today. Later on, I told the teen to watch for Joe Donat's reaction before I repeated this question to him. His reaction was the same as mine. It was like opening a fire hydrant when someone asks you for a drink. After examining the thesis from the Fall in Genesis to the Restoration in the Revelation over the last year, we come to this final message. We are going to look at the conclusion of the matter, the ultimate end of man.

1. There has to be something more -

The young are looking at the future as a blank book where they will write their story. For those who are in the middle of their adult life, they sort of have the plot worked out and are filling in the details. For those who are older, the writing of the book almost finished and there is no way to go back and edit the story. There is a sadness when we come to the end whether the story was tragic or glorious, or whether it was pitiful or joyful. In a little while, we will move on to the epilogue, or a postscript, to the story. The Bible is not just a book with a lot of little morality stories. It is a book that inexorably drives to an end.

For now, I want to look at the concern of man to know about what comes hereafter.

We can see the fear that man has in the life of the Russian dictator, Stalin. He was constantly in fear of being poisoned or killed. He had eight bedrooms which be locked up like safes in a bank. Nobody ever knew in which of these bedrooms he slept on an given night. This reminds me of what one of Job's friends said:

Job 15:20-24 The wicked man travaileth with pain all *his* days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. **[no one knows when he will die]**

21 A dreadful sound *is* in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. **[people wait for the destroyer with anxious dread, it is as though he can hear his footsteps at every moment]**

22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. **[people know that there is no discharge from that final battle]**

23 He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying*, Where *is it*? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.

24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.

Rom 8:22-25 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

Matt 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is,  
there will your heart be also.

The whole world has a desire to go someplace happy and peaceful when they die. Even though they don't have the Bible, man has not been discouraged from speculating and postulating about what happens at the very end.

- The Bahá'í Faith regards heaven (and hell) as symbolic of a "spiritual condition" where closeness to God is defined as heaven and a state of remoteness from God as hell.
- In Kabbalah Jewish mysticism there are seven heavens each governed by an angel ranging from the abode of Adam and Eve to the throne of glory under which the souls of unborn children abide.
- Among the Maori, the heavens are divided into various numbers of realms that include the heaven of sunshine and rain, lakes, the place where children come from, the place where souls come from, the place where spirits live and they are supported by pillars or by gods, or even by an octopus according to one legend.
- For the Greeks, there was Elysium, a paradise of plenty where the dead hoped to spend eternity. The Elysian fields were the final resting place of the souls of the heroic and the virtuous. They were on the western margin of the earth.
- For the Norse, there was Valhalla, Odin's hall of the slain who are welcomed by Bragi and escorted to Valhalla by the valkyries. The hall has 540 doors, so wide that 800 warriors could walk through side-by-side, walls made of spears, a roof made of shields and benches covered with breastplates.

## 2. Heaven -

Some people don't like to hear about the end of a book or a movie. I don't mind at all hearing about how a movie or a book ends. In fact, I am glad to hear how the Bible and this world end because I need that kind of hope to get me through this part of the story of our lives. That is good news to those who

know Jesus Christ as their Savior, but there are so many people who are floundering without any real hope to hang on to. For those who belong to Christ, we are told a lot about heaven, but the half has not been told. It is like what Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveler of the 13th century, said as he lay dying. He was urged by his detractors to recant and withdraw the stories he had told about China and the lands of the Far East. He refused, saying, "I have not told half of what I saw."

1 Cor 2:9-10 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed; "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be!"

– Charles L. Allen in *Home Fires*

There is no end to the fantasizing that men have over heaven. Let's look at some of the things that the Bible says about heaven.

- We go there immediately.

2 Cor 5:6-8 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

- The tree of life is there.

Rev 22:1-3 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

What man could have had in the garden of Eden is now restored to him.

- Tears are not there, death is not there, sorrow is not there, crying is not there.

Rev 21:3-5 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

- Jesus is there.

Col 3:1-3 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

We know very little about heaven, but I once heard a theologian describe it as "an unknown region with a well-know inhabitant," and there is not a better way to think of it than that. Richard Baxter expresses the thought in these lines:

My knowledge of that life is small,  
The eye of faith is dim,  
But it's enough that Christ knows all,  
And I shall be with him.

To those who have learned to love and trust Jesus, the prospect of meeting him face to face and being with him forever is the hope that keeps us going, no matter what life may throw at us.  
– James Packer, *Your Father Loves You*

- There will be rewards there

At the day of Christ, believers will stand before the Lord to receive crowns for faithful service—not as payment, but as reward from a gracious Savior.

1Cor 3:8,13 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

The Crown of Righteousness – for those who have loved His appearing and lived in expectation of Christ's return (2 Timothy 4:8).

The Incorruptible Crown – for those who run the Christian race with self-discipline and perseverance (1 Corinthians 9:25).

The Crown of Life – for those who endure trials and remain faithful unto

death (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).

The Crown of Rejoicing – for those who lead others to Christ, the soul-winner's crown (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

The Crown of Glory – for faithful pastors and teachers who shepherd God's flock willingly and humbly (1 Peter 5:4).

These crowns are not for boasting but for offering back to Christ, as the redeemed cast their crowns before His throne in worship (Rev 4:10–11).

- A mansion is waiting for you there.

John 14:2-6 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.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

- You get to eat there.

Rev 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

- You do not come back from there.

Luke 16:23,26 And in hell he lift

up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

### 3. Hell -

But for those who do not have the hope, the anticipation, the expectation of heaven, there is a place that they are inevitably, although not inescapably, marching towards, specifically, Hell.

A politician awoke after an operation and found the curtains in his hospital room drawn. "Why are the curtains closed?" he asked the nurse. "Is it night time already?"

"No," the nurse replied, "But there's a fire across the street, and we didn't want you to wake and think the operation was unsuccessful."

– Rotary Down Under, as quoted in Reader's Digest

Matt 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Isa 28:16-20 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.

20 For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it*: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.

I don't know if you have ever had that feeling of the bed being too short and the blankets being too narrow. It is the feeling you get in small cars, economy symphony concert seats, or booths at restaurants

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Because people do not like the thought of Hell, false prophets try to get rid of it. Here are some ways that the cults have defined away Hell based on *Facts on Life After Death* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon.

- Christian Science, founded by spiritist Mary Baker Eddy, teaches that "there is no death." They believe that "heaven and hell are states of thought, not places. People experience their own heaven or hell right here on earth."
- Edgar Cayce, a spiritist and New Age prophet, said that "the destiny of the soul, as of all creation, is to become One with the Creator" and that no soul is ever lost.
- New Age cult leader Sun Myung Moon of The Unification Church believes that "God will not desert any person eternally. By some means...they will be restored."
- Mormonism, founded by occultist Joseph Smith, argues, "The false doctrine

that the punishment to be visited upon erring souls is endless...is but a dogma of unauthorized and erring sectarians, at once unscriptural, unreasonable, and revolting."

- Jehovah's Witnesses, founded by Charles Taze Russell maintains that the wicked are forever annihilated because "the teaching about a fiery hell can rightly be designated as a 'teaching of demons.'"

- The Church of the New Jerusalem founded by spiritist Emanuel Swedenborg, emphasizes that God "does not condemn anyone to hell."

- Eckankar, a New Age religion founded by Paul Twitchell and Darwin Gross, insists that "there is no death"...and that there is no eternal hell.

- Lucis Trust and the Arcane School/Full Moon Meditation Groups, established by New Age spiritist Alice Bailey, argue that "the fear of death is based upon...old erroneous teaching as to heaven and hell."

- The Love Family (The Children of God), founded by spiritist David Berg, views hell as a temporal purgatory: "The lake of fire is where the wicked go to get purged from their sins...to let them eventually come...out."

- Rosicrucianism, an occult philosophy, declares that "the 'eternal damnation' of those who are not 'saved' does not mean destruction nor endless torture," and that "the Christian religion did not originally contain any dogmas about Hell."

- Unitarian Universalism confesses the following: "It seems safe to say that no Unitarian Universalist believes in a resurrection of the body, a literal heaven or hell, or any kind of eternal punishment."

- The Theosophical Society, founded by medium Helena P. Blavatsky, declares, "we positively refuse to accept the...belief in eternal reward or eternal punishment." Hence, "Death...is not...a cause for fear."

- The spirits everywhere proclaim their allegiance to cultic teachings. "Ramtha," the spirit speaking through medium J. S.Knight, claims "God has never judged

you or anyone" and "No, there is no hell and there is no devil." "Lilly" and other spirits channeled through medium Ruth Montgomery argue that there is no such thing as death" and that "God punishes no man."

Even some preachers are afraid to actually talk about hell. In some evangelical churches it has become unfashionable to refer to hell as a place of suffering. The more enlightened way to speak of hell is to refer to it as merely separation from God. While there *is* separation from God, that ignores the terros of Hell.

The weight of so many testifying against Hell does not make it any less believable. Since their opinions are not able to be substantiated it only points out how innately our understanding of Hell is.

- It is a place of fire and torment.

Luke 16:20-24 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Mark 9:43-46 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall

be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not,  
and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut  
it off: it is better for thee to enter  
halt into life, than having two  
feet to be cast into hell, into the  
fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not,  
and the fire is not quenched.

- It is a place of darkness

It is not a place where all your friends  
will be, just some of them, but you won't  
be able to tell anyhow.

Jude 1:13 refers to it as "the  
blackness of darkness"

Matt 22:13 Then said the king to  
the servants, Bind him hand and  
foot, and take him away, and cast  
*him* into outer darkness; there  
shall be weeping and gnashing of  
teeth.

Matt 25:30 And cast ye the  
unprofitable servant into outer  
darkness: there shall be weeping  
and gnashing of teeth.

- It is not ruled by the devil, he will be  
punished there also.

Rev 20:10 And the devil that  
deceived them was cast into the  
lake of fire and brimstone, where  
the beast and the false prophet  
*are*, and shall be tormented day  
and night for ever and ever.

#### 4. There is one good thing about Hell -

There is only one good thing about  
Hell: it is a place where you don't have to  
go. God, in His mercy, has provided a  
clear way of escape through Jesus Christ.  
Scripture says,

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall  
call upon the name of the Lord  
shall be saved.

No one is predestined to perish.

2Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Christ Himself declared,

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Hell is real, but salvation is freely offered. No one need ever enter that place of eternal separation from God – but they must freely accept what Christ did on the cross taking that eternal separation and hell for us.

The believer's heart rejoices in the assurance that every burden, every tear, and every sacrifice in this life will one day be swallowed up in glory. No matter how hard the labor or how deep the suffering, it will be worth it all when we stand before our Savior and hear Him say:

Matt 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Friend, your story is still being

written. You may not know how many pages remain, but one day the final line will be drawn. When that day comes, your soul will step into eternity — either into the presence of the Savior who died for you, or into the separation of a place God never intended for you to go. After the story of your life is over, what will your epilogue be? Your story will not conclude with the words "The End." On the last page of your story on earth, the last line will be "The beginning..." It will be about the beginning your eternity. If Christ is not part of your story while you are on earth, the beginning of your eternity will be in the fires of Hell. If you accept Christ as your Savior, the last line will be about your beginning of your eternity in heaven. Do not let the last chapter of your life end in regret. Open your heart to Him today, and let God write a new ending — one that begins with grace and never ends.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Child of God, your story is still being written too. Every line penned in obedience echoes into eternity. The crowns of righteousness, life, rejoicing, and glory await those who have been faithful — not as payment, but as joy to lay at His feet. So live now for what will matter then. Don't grow weary in well-doing; the finish line is near. When you stand before your Lord, may He read it aloud with delight: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Set your affection on things above. Lay up treasures in Heaven. Keep laboring, keep loving, keep looking — for soon faith will become sight, and we shall be forever with the Lord.

1. There has to be something more - Job 15:20-24, Rom 8:22-25, Matt 6:19-21
2. Heaven - 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Rev 22:1-3,

21:3-5, Col 3:1-3, 1Cor 3:8,13, John 14:2-6, Rev 19:7-9, Luke 16:23,26

3. Hell - Matt 7:13-14, Isa 28:16-20, John 3:36, Luke 16:20-24, Mark 9:43-46, Matt 22:13, 25:30, Rev 20:10,

4. There is one good thing about Hell - Rom 10:13, 2Pet 3:9, John 5:24, Matt 25:21, Rom 8:18, Gal 6:9, John 5:24