

Date : 7 July 2024
Theme : Evidence of Faith
Topic : Is there Heaven and Hell?
Passage : John 14:1-11
Key Verse : *“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?” John 14:2 (NIV)*

Introduction

A recent survey revealed that 70% of Singaporeans believe in life after death and in heaven and hell. [*salt&light news: “Six things the recent IPS surveys reveal about the state of religion in Singapore”; March 25, 2021*].

Are heaven and hell real? How can we know the truth? What are they like and what happens there? Who will be there and how do we get there?

Lee Strobel was at one time an atheist. But when his wife became a believer in Christ Jesus, he started to investigate (using his journalism and legal training skills). He concluded there’s convincing evidence that there’s heaven and hell. He now urges people to start thinking about the afterlife and how one should get registered for heaven.

No one can tell how heaven and hell look like, unless he has been there. No one, except Jesus who came from heaven: *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven—the Son of Man.” (John 3:13)*. And Jesus said, *“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:2 – key verse)*. Similarly, the Lord also spoke of hell, the place of torment.

1. Hell is a reality

a) What is hell like?

The Lord related a true story of conversation in hell to show what hell is like. (*The Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19-24*)

“The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. (vs 22,23)

- Hell is a place of torment (vs 23)
- There’s agony in the fire
 - In *hell*, the rich man said, *“I am in agony in this fire.”. (vs 24)*
 - Fire that is eternal... the fire keeps on burning, and *“the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:48)*

b) What happens in hell?

Those who reject God will be thrown into the blazing furnace.

- The wicked will be separated from the righteous and thrown *“into the blazing furnace...” (Matthew 13:50)*. This ‘furnace’ is described (*in Revelations 20:10 & 21:8*) as a lake that burns with fire and sulphur.

- There will be **“weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** (*Matthew 13:50*)

In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we are told that:

- Those in hell will agonise in the fire
- The ‘Rich Man’ suffers from an unquenchable thirst
‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ (*Luke 16:24*)
- There is an eternal separation from God
“... between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.” (*Luke 16:26*)

c) Who will end in hell?

- Satan and his fallen angels
And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Revelation 20:10
- Those whose names are not in the ‘Book of Life’
“Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:15
 - Those who reject God and remain in the sin of rebellion.
“... wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
 - Those who break faith and did not continue to trust in Jesus.
 - the lesson learnt from the Exodus journey.

2. The reality of heaven

a) What is heaven like?

- There will be many rooms (**key verse: John 14:2**)
 - This is Jesus’ promise for those who would put their trust in Him: **“I am going there to prepare a place for you”.**
 - Jesus is preparing the ‘mansion’ right now.
- The Apostle John saw the new heaven and the new earth
“Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth... the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” Revelation 21:1-2
 - John saw the new heaven – a city descending from the sky... beautiful, like the most perfect of gemstones are its walls and its foundations.
 - Heaven is beautiful beyond description.
 - Streets of gold, gates of pearl, foundations of costly stones. (**Revelations 21:18-21**)

- A place where the glory of God shines.
 - Heaven is illuminated solely by the Presence of God.

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. Revelation 21:23

b) What happens in heaven?

- There will be continuous worship in heaven

“... For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and His servants will worship Him.” Revelations 22:3 (NLT)
- In heaven, there will be much joy
 - Fellowship with God is the essence of heavenly life. Our primary joy in heaven will be knowing and seeing God.
- There will be no more death / no more mourning or crying

‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ Revelations 21:4
- The redeemed will have a glorified body
 - By the power of His resurrection, He ***“will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” (Philippians 3:21)***
- Re-union with loved ones and friends who know Christ as Saviour... people are recognisable
 - Will even ***“feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 8:11)***
 - Will recognise patriarchs and prophets like Moses and Elijah. ***(Matthew 17:3)***

c) Who will be in heaven?

- God Himself – seated on the throne: ***“...the throne of God and of the Lamb” Revelation 22:1***
 - The dwelling place of God is with His people.

“Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:3
- The eternal home is ***“only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Revelations 21:27***
 - The physically resurrected believers will be here.
 - The redeemed of the Lord – they will dwell in the presence of God forever:

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,..” (John 3:36) & “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)
 - The overcomers will be there: those who keep on trusting Jesus to the end.

He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. Revelation 21:7 (NKJV)
 - Who will not be there?

The unbelieving – those who have not place their trust in Jesus.

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.” Revelation 21:8

 - Includes those so called ‘believers’ who carry on living in their sinful lifestyle but hope to escape hell by repenting at the eleventh hour.

3. How can I prepare for heaven?

Eternity may come sooner than we think. In preparation for that moment, we need to know the truth – that although most people believe they are heading there including most church going ‘Christians’, not everyone will get to heaven.

As heaven, the eternal home is only for **“those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”** (*Revelations 21:27*), we must endeavour that we are found in the lamb’s Book of life. Having repented of our sins and having received Jesus as Lord and Saviour, it’s imperative to continue walking in Christ with an on-going faith.

- Faith in Christ must be an ongoing faith
 - The Exodus journey teaches us that the journey of faith must be ongoing. Those who did not continue walking in faith failed to enter the Promise Land.
- Run the race well to the finishing point
 - “... hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain.”** *Philippians 2:16*
 - Run like Paul who said: **“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”** (*Philippians 3:14*)
- Aim for that RICH welcome when you come into the Kingdom
 - “...make every effort to confirm your calling and election... and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** *Peter 1:10,11*
 - Don’t be satisfied with just getting in by the ‘skin of your teeth’.
 - Don’t just focus on doing the minimum to get in to heaven.
 - Focus on how to set the goal to be fruitful to Jesus. Not just fulfilling the minimum, but how to maximise our joy by pleasing the Lord.
- Aim for the rich reward
 - Jesus said: **“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.** *Revelation 22:12*
 - *Revelation 22:5* says that in heaven, God’s faithful believers **“will reign for ever and ever.”** In reigning, it points to being involved in some capacity in the eternal Kingdom.

Application

1. As a believer of Christ Jesus, what kind of faithfulness can ensure you will be there?
2. Should I try to just get into heaven or should I aim higher, eg to receive that rich welcome in the eternal Kingdom?