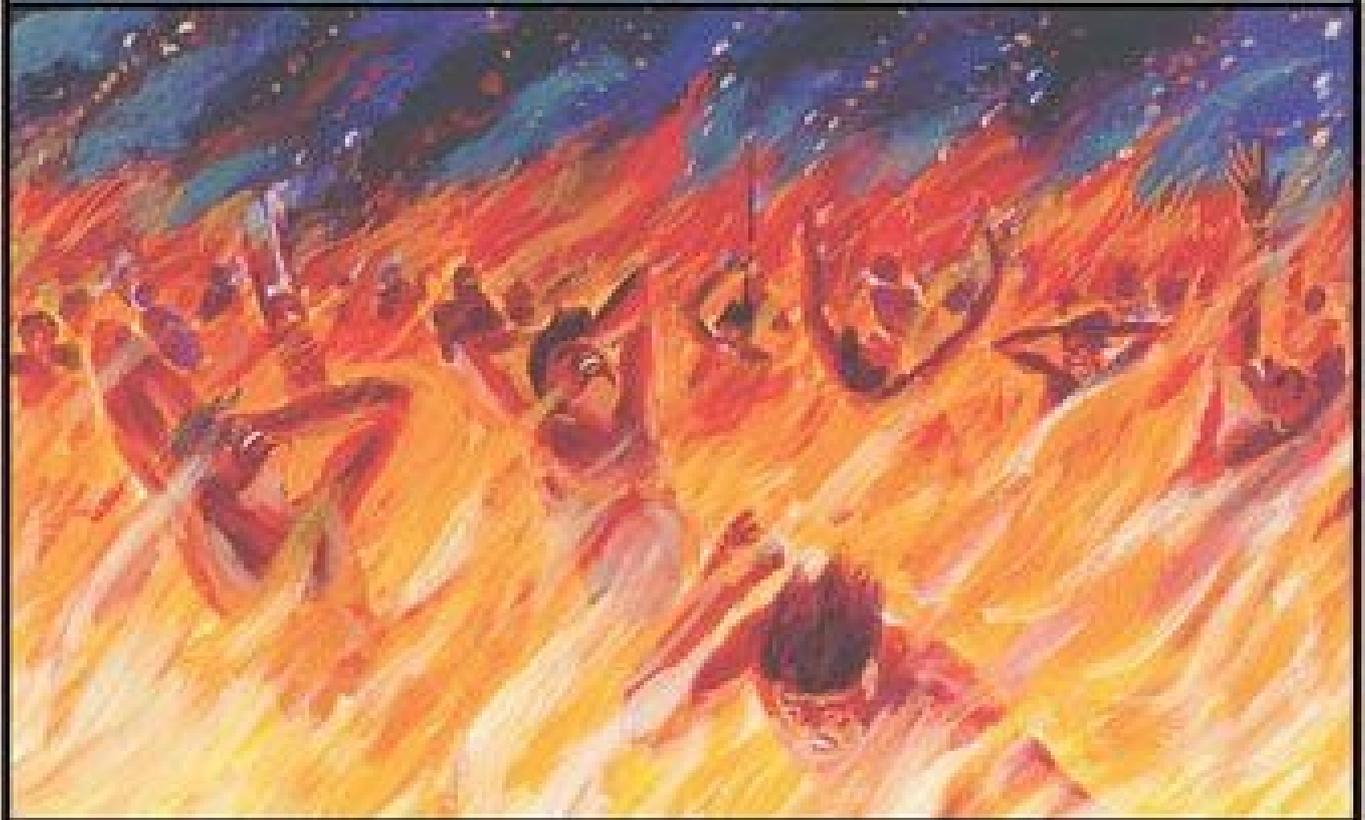


Heaven and



A Message

By Dr. Peter S. Ruckman

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Heaven & Hell

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Heaven and Hell

Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 20. We're going to talk for a while how things are going to wind up. There is something that God has planted in the human heart that makes you always press forward to the future and worry about the future. The surest proof that there must be something ahead in the future is the fact that a hope of the future resides in the human breast, and you can't get rid of it. In Russia, when someone dies, people go by the grave, weep, and place a sprig from a fir or pine tree on the grave. Why do that? If you're an atheist, the one in the grave evolved, and he's not coming up; he's dead. Why are you standing there, crying, and putting the live branch on the grave? Well, by doing that you are showing that down in your heart you hope that there is a resurrection. You hope that the "dead rod" will bloom and bud. In plainer words, God put that hope in the human breast, and you can't get rid of it. When people start asking questions about the bible, they may start from any number of different angles, but before they are through, they are asking about the Millennium and on into eternity. When people start asking questions about the Bible, they will eventually get around to asking about the Tribulation, the Advent, the Millennium, the White Throne Judgment, and whatever is after *that*. The mind presses out toward eternity. It doesn't make any difference if a man is an Atheist or Agnostic or Communist or Absolutionalist or Positivist; the mind tends to leap ahead and wonder how it's going to end up. The Bible tells you how it is going to end up.

In Revelation 20:10, you find out what happens to the Devil when this mess is over. There may be all kinds of prophecies about what will happen to him, but it doesn't take place until there. When you get to Revelation 20:10, you read, **"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."** Then, the writer goes on in the passage in verses 11 and 12 and says, **"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."** Looking on down in verses 14 and 15, we read, **"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."** All right, come on down to Revelation 21:1, which says, **"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."** John continues in Revelation 21 and talks about seeing New Jerusalem descending and the fact that God will be our God in that city. He says that there will be no more pain, sorrow, or death; **"for the former things are passed away...Behold, I make all things new"** (Rev. 21:4-5).

Those things speak of a final state, and in that final state, things come out right. They *don't* come out right down here. I have no illusions about that. There are Christians that

are suffering things right now that will never find out why they are suffering until they go home to glory. Don't try to tell me that it all gets fixed down here; I don't believe it. I believe people do bad things down here and never get caught. I believe that. I believe many perfect murders have been committed, thousands of them. Someone kills someone else, and no one ever knows about it. His conscience never bothers him, and they never catch him. However, they *will* catch him one day. If there is a God up in heaven, it has to come out right. In the end (and it isn't the end yet), you are going to get what you have coming to you. In the end, if you've done right and no one has noticed it or praised you or thanked you for it, you will receive praise and thanks for it. If there is any God in heaven, it has to be that way. It can't come out like the Hollywood movies come out. It has to come out right. Someday, someplace, sometime, somewhere, if you have done wrong, what you did wrong will catch up with you. Paul said, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body... whether it be good or bad"** (2 Cor. 5:10). Every one of us will give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12). So someday, it's going to wind up and be taken care of.

The Bible speaks of heaven and hell. When we talk about heaven, we know what we are talking about. Technically, we are talking about New Jerusalem. I know that New Jerusalem comes down from God *out of heaven*. Garner Ted Armstrong makes much of that. He says, "Well, it's silly to talk about heaven because the Bible doesn't speak about a Christian going to heaven." Well, no, but Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven. So when we talk about going to heaven, you understand what I am saying. I'm not talking about going to Jupiter and Venus and the galaxies. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about going to a *place* that God has prepared for you *up in heaven*. It's a *real* place. Jesus said, **"I go to prepare a place for you...."** He also said, **"If it were not so, I would have told you."** Now, there are some certain things that heaven is *not*, according to the word of God, and there are some certain things that hell is *not*, according to the word of God. There are certain things that heaven *is*, according to the word of God, and there are certain things that hell *is*, according to the word of God. We need to look into those things because people have all kinds of funny ideas about what heaven and hell are like. You need to see what the revelation of God is about these things, because the revelation of God, the word of God, is the Book that professes to know.

In the first place, heaven is not a *mental state*. This world is filled with people that have this "mind over matter" and "it's all in your mind" philosophy. Doctors are hung up on that. When you have something wrong with your knees, they say, "It's all in your mind." You say, "No, man, it hurts right down here." He says, "Well, you just think that. Take these pills. The trouble is nervous tension." The Bible says that in the last days, people will be **"heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."** This generation of people thinks that it's all in the mind, that it's a mental state.

I'm sure you know the standard preacher's story, but I'll tell it again. A Christian Science practitioner came up to a house and knocked at the door. She said to the little boy who answered the door, "Is your father in?" The little boy replied, "Yes, he's in, but he can't come to the door right now because he is very sick." The Christian Scientist said,

“There is no sickness. Your father is not sick. He just thinks he’s sick.” The little boy repeated it about five times. A week later, she came by again and said, “Can I talk to your father now? Remember what I said!” He said, “Yes, ma’am. Now he thinks he’s dead.” You see, it is *not* just a mental state.

Every now and then, comic strips come out with some really profound stuff. (I read the funnies. I think they’re much closer to the Bible than the front page.) There is a cartoon strip done by some guy who I’m sure must be from the Midwest somewhere because he never has any ideas to work with except for some little hick town with two police officers and a mayor. He has to fish for ideas. It is amazing to me that he ever gets anything at all, but he does. He has a cartoon called “Sam and Silo.” They are two cops in a Midwestern town. In the cartoon, one of them is sitting in his patrol car behind a sign in about April and says, “It’s warm. It’s warm.” Big clouds are back in the sky, and he says, “For April, it’s warm.” You then see icicles begin to form on the car, and he says, “It’s warm. It’s warm. It’s all in my mind. It’s not cold. It’s actually warm. It’s getting warmer.” It then begins to snow. As the snow comes down, he says, “It’s in my mind. Mind over matter. Mind over matter.” Pretty soon, the snow has covered the whole car and his head. He finally says, “I think there’s something the matter with my mind.” That is what is wrong with these people who think that it’s “mind over matter.” There is something the matter with their minds. That’s their problem.

Heaven is *not* a glorified world. People have funny ideas about heaven. They think that New Jerusalem is going to be just like this world, only better. I’m here to tell you that all man-made heavens have jails for people they don’t like. All of these fellows talk about “bringing in the kingdom,” “the year of Jubilee,” “the kingdom am a-coming,” and “His truth is marching on.” I’ve observed something about them; they all have penitentiaries and mental wards and graves for folks they don’t agree with. Heaven is not a man-made world. Heaven is not like anything that you have ever gotten into in your life. You often hear preachers preach about heaven, and they give you some funny ideas about it. Sometimes when you hear them talk about heaven, you would get the idea that heaven is a place where you’ll be sitting around a fireplace with Grandma and Grandpa with the “circle unbroken.” Your old dog will be sitting by the fire getting ready to go out to hunt rabbit or opossum. Folks get some funny ideas about heaven. I think that there are some Southerners who think that they will have bream beds in heaven.

Heaven is like nothing you have ever seen. Heaven is not a glorified world. God made heaven. **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”** (Isa. 55:8–9). What you like down here, you will not like up there. What you don’t like down here, you will love up there. If the church service runs more than an hour down here, you get nervous. How would you like to be in a service that runs twenty-four hours a day for 365 days a year? Wouldn’t that wear you out? Let me tell you something; when you get up there, you’ll appreciate that.

There is a parable that I like to quote about a stork and a swan. I believe Moody was the first one to tell it. A stork was going down the beach looking for snails. Every now and

then, he would peck in the sand and pull up some snails. While the stork was there fishing for snails, down from heaven came a beautiful swan. The swan flew alongside the stork and said, "Say, when you get through eating here, why don't you fly to heaven with me?" The stork continued walking along the beach licking up snails and replied, "What is it like in heaven?" The swan answered, "Oh, it is a beautiful place." The swan then proceeded to tell with rapture what a wonderful place heaven was. The stork never looked up. He just went on down the beach looking for snails. The stork finally asked, "Do they have any snails in heaven?" The swan replied, "No, they don't have any snails in heaven." The stork picked up another snail and said, "Well, I don't want to go there." That is what is wrong with people. You want what you want down here, and if they don't have that in heaven, you don't want to go. There may be some unsaved fellow reading this right now, and that's your problem. Your whole problem is that you know what you like, but it's all here. You can't imagine it being up there. So, you think you'll just stay around here, don't you? Well, you won't stay down here forever. Santayana, the Roman Catholic atheistic philosopher (that's about what he was), said that he prayed this prayer every day: "Lord, I'm not good enough to earn heaven. I'm not bad enough to go to hell. So, please just let me stay here." He didn't stay; he died. He went someplace. You will die, and you will go someplace. Heaven is *not* a glorified world.

Heaven is *not* a place where everybody, including those that are lost, will show up and be saved. Folks have some funny ideas about heaven. Some folks have the idea that when they get to heaven everyone will be there. Take, for example, these "Hee Haw" barn dance programs. They think that all of the Country and Western singers are saved. They sing about going home to a hillbilly heaven. They think that Red Foley, Tex Ritter, Eddy Arnold, and all of that depraved bunch will be there because every once in a while they sang a hymn. "And now it's hymn time on the Grand Ole Opry. Little Jimmy Dickens is going to sing that favorite hymn, *White Christmas*." Oh, yeah, man. "Now, here's Billy Cowcud and the Sodbusters to sing that favorite old hymn, *Lord, Help Three Suckers to Buy This Record*." Tex Ritter gets up and sings *Peace in the Valley*, and folks think he's saved. You ought to hear him sing *Rye Whiskey* and *Cigarettes, Whiskey, and Wild Women*. You ought to hear him sing *Smoke, Smoke, Smoke that Cigarette*. There's more to it, man, than what you hear. Folks get the idea that everyone is going to be in heaven. They have all of their favorites in heaven. They have Hank Williams up there. Why, that poor, old, dope-headed, pill-popping, chronic alcoholic! He lived without Christ and died without Christ, alone in the world without hope and without God. You're not going to find all of those people up there. I'll grant you that some of those Country and Western singers are saved, but certainly not because of their works. They are saved because some old country mama and daddy reared them right. That's all.

Heaven is also *not* a place where people get in just because they are religious. That Bible, "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**" (John 3:3). It's not going to be a matter of just doing what you think is right and living up to what you believe is so.

There are also some things that hell is *not*. First of all, hell is *not* the grave. There are all kinds of things that are in hell that aren't in the grave. Folks say, "Well, this word here

means the grave.” Why don’t you go down to the grave and look? If that word means “grave,” why don’t you go down to the graveyard and dig it up to see if anyone is praying down there and weeping down there? See if there’s any wailing and gnashing of teeth. There is no weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the grave. There is no prayer in the grave. There is no one in the grave saying, “Father Abraham, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers.” No one is being tormented in the grave. The very idea of saying that hell is the grave. They don’t have prayer meetings in the grave. There was a fellow down there in Luke 16 who was begging for a drop of water. Go to any grave in this town, and you won’t find that. You are dealing with a bunch of people that have mind trouble, brother. There is something wrong with their mind.

Hell is *not* a place of sinful companionship. There is an old saying out in the world which says, “Heaven for the climate; hell for the company.” No, hell is not a place of sinful companionship. When you get to hell, your buddies down there will have no use for you, and you will have no use for them. God is love. When you get to the place where there is no God, there is no love. When you get to hell with your “friends,” they’ll curse you, and you’ll curse them. You’ll wish to God that you’d never seen each other. What could be more horrible than to be in hell with an old buddy and to suddenly realize that you damned him and he damned you? Or she damned you and you damned her? You’ll have *companionship*? You won’t have any companionship. Hell is not a place of sinful companionship.

In Los Angeles, California, there was a great preacher years ago named Robert Shuler. I’m not talking about that freak in the chrome and glass theater; that is the satanic counterfeit. I’m talking about a little preacher from West Virginia that pastored the Trinity Methodist Church for years and years. They called him “Fightin’ Bob Shuler,” and he would fight. One time there was a big roar out there about Hollywood censorship. He had to go down to the red light district of the town to witness to a prostitute. As a witness he took one of the older men from his church with him in order to protect his testimony. The fellow that he took with him was in his seventies. They went along the streets there and saw all kinds of things. The older man had never been to that part of town before and didn’t know that things like that existed. He had been reared in the country before he came to L.A. As they were walking along and observing those things, Bob Shuler suddenly turned to the elderly gentleman and said, “Did you ever stop to think what a terrible thing it would be for your granddaughter to have to live forever with these people?” The old man was shocked and answered, “What do you mean by that?” Shuler replied, “Well, don’t you have a teenage granddaughter that plays the organ in our church?” He said, “Yes, I do.” Shuler continued, “She’s never been converted, has she?” The old man said, “No.” Shuler said, “Well, just think...the Bible says that in the lake of fire will be idolators, murderers, adulterers, whoremongers, and the unbelieving. How would you like for your granddaughter to spend eternity with that company?” The old man never said another word. The next Sunday in church when they got to the invitation, the old man went over to that organ and sat down next to his granddaughter. He put his arm around her and talked for about ten minutes. She got off that bench, came down to the altar, and was saved. That is the right thing to do. You don’t want that company. You may have to keep company with that crew down here, but you don’t have to keep company with them in

eternity. God can get you out. Hell is not a place where there is sinful companionship.

Hell is *not* a place of sinful pleasure. Like I say, folks have some funny ideas about hell. They think that when you get there, everybody is going to have a “hell of a good time.” There is a song out in the world that says, “There is no beer in heaven, so we drink it down here.” Hey, man, there’s no beer in hell. Do you like beer? Don’t go to hell. They don’t have any beer in hell. Do you like cocktails? Don’t go to hell. There are no cocktails in hell. Are you hung up on a fix right now? Are you living off cocaine and heroin? You’d better stay out of hell. There’s no cocaine or heroin in hell. You’ll come out cold turkey down there, boy. People have funny ideas. Hell is not a place of sinful pleasure. Hell is a place of fire, burning, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

There is no sinful pleasure in hell. I can’t imagine being in a place where you would never hear a child laugh. A child’s laughter is one of the most beautiful sounds in the world. You get out there in the lake of fire, and you’ll never hear a little boy or girl laugh. Wouldn’t that be something? Imagine 150,000,000,000 years and never hearing a child laugh or a bird sing. Wouldn’t that be something? You’ll never hear the waves breaking on a beach. There are millions of sounds in this world that you just take for granted. You get in hell, and all you’ll hear is the roaring of that place and the din of drums in your ears and the screams of the damned. What a way to spend eternity, man.

Folks say, “Well, you don’t believe that stuff, do you?” If I didn’t believe that I’d quit preaching. I would quit preaching tonight. You say, “If it’s *that* real, why don’t you do more about it?” I’m ashamed of myself for not doing more about it. Sometimes I wish that hell was as real to me as it is to the Lord, but I’m sure that it can never be that real to me. If it was that real to me I would lose my mind. I do believe that when unsaved people die, they got to hell. I believe that there is someone reading this booklet right now that is as good as in hell right now with the door shut and the key thrown away. I’m conscious of the fact that when you’re through, you’ll just sit there. I’ve seem them do it for years. By the time that you have seen them do that for as long as I have, you tend to get kind of hard. Maybe you shouldn’t get that hard. Maybe you should stay sort of soft and tender and burdened about it, but by the time you have stood before eight hundred congregations and preached over eight hundred messages and sung over twenty-four hundred invitation verses only to have the people stand there and look at you, you get to the place where you say, “Well, I’ll deliver the message, and that will be that. God will do something, or He won’t.” I believe that if you are unsaved, you will go to hell and burn forever when you die. I don’t believe that hell is a place that you are going to enjoy. I don’t believe that hell is a place of sinful pleasure.

I’ll tell you something else that I don’t believe. I don’t believe that hell is a place where a man will have a second “chance.” There isn’t one thing in the Bible that indicates that after the White Throne Judgment you will have any more chances. If you have any chance, it will be at the White Throne, if you call that a chance. Boy, if that’s a chance, you take it. I don’t want it; it’s too hot for me. I have no intention of facing it. I have the intention of having the blood of God’s Son cover that mess for me, but if you want to try it, try it. I don’t recommend it. Hell is *not* a place where a man gets a second chance. Let’s assume that next Friday morning there will be a plane leaving for San Diego. I’d get a

reservation sometime this week for that plane. I'd go down to the airport Friday morning, but if I'd get there about ten minutes late, I'd see the stabilizer of that plane disappearing over the horizon. I'd say to the man at the gate, "Tell that thing to turn around and come back to get met." He'd say, "No, it's gone." I'd say, "But I need a second chance." He'd say, "You knew when it was leaving, didn't you?" I'd reply, "Yes." He'd answer, "You had time to get your ticket, didn't you?" Tough apples; you missed it." You know that you are going to die. You have *some* sense, don't you? I mean, education hasn't completely ruined you, has it? You're going to die. Amen? You *know* that you are going to die. How come you haven't made preparation for it? You'll stand there are the judgment and say, "Lord, I want a second chance." There'll be no second chance. Hell is not a place for second chances.

Now we'll cover some things that heaven is *like*. You understand that I'm speaking in the Biblical context throughout. The Bible says that heaven is a place of rejoicing. **"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"** (Luke 15:7). Heaven is a place of rejoicing.

Heaven is a place of eternal life. He gives to His sheep **"eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand"** (John 10:28–29). Heaven is a place of eternal life.

Heaven is a place of worship. Up there they worship in spirit and truth. They worship the Lamb and cast their crowns before His feet and say, **"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb..."** (Rev. 5:13).

Heaven is a place of everlasting life and joy. Out there in the Azores, the islands off the coast of Africa, many years ago before the time of Christopher Columbus, there was a sign on a rock. That sign said, "No More Beyond" and pointed west. After Columbus discovered San Salvador, they erased the "No" from the sign. To this day, the sign now reads "More Beyond." There is more beyond the other side. You may have eternal life here, but there is more on the other side. You will have eternal life over there in a way you never experience it here. Paul says, **"Lay hold on eternal life..."** (1 Tim. 6:12). Come to grips with it. Over there someday, I'll live in a sinless and perfect body. I'll never have an ache again, never have a pain, never wear out, never get old, never get tired, never sin, and never have to worry about what I think or do forever and ever. Do you know what heaven is going to be like for me? To me, heaven is a place where I can do what I want and think what I want twenty-four hours a day and never have to worry about it. Folks say, "That's a selfish ambition." Yeah, it sure is, isn't it? Thank god that He knows how we are. Can you imagine being in a place where you can think anything that you want to think and do anything that you want to do all day long and never have to check it to see if it is right? Folks say, "That's impossible." That is what heaven is like. It will be like that. I want to get in a place like that. I preached one night in a certain church and got a blank response from the congregation. I said, "Well, you know me. I just never grew up. I'm juvenile. I mean, I still want what I want when I want it, and I want to go to a place where I can do what I want to do. Isn't that right?" A little boy about ten years old sitting on the front row

said, "That's right!" I said, "Okay, kid. Me and you!" If nobody else, me and him.

Heaven is a place where you are just like Jesus Christ. I can't imagine what that would be like. I am so unlike Jesus Christ right now. Wait until I get to be just like Him. Wait until I get hooked up to the Trinity. I'm not plugged in here; I'm in a body of flesh that deteriorates and falls apart. Someday, though, I am going to plug into Someone who never had a beginning; therefore there is no deterioration. There is no loss of energy. The Bible says, **"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him..."** (1 John 3:2). **"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself"** (Phil. 3:21). **"He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..."** (Rom. 8:29). The saints will have perfect bodies.

I have a motel room in glory; it's reserved. I phoned in for it over forty-five years ago and got a reservation. Folks sin, "Build me a cabin in the corner of gloryland." That won't work. You can build a cabin out of wood, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the wood, hay, and stubble all burns up. People have funny songs about heaven. They sing, "No tears in heaven." There will be tears in heaven for a while. Folks sing, "Lord, build me a cabin in the corner of gloryland." The Bible says, **"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...that where I am, there ye may be also"** (John 14:2-3).

What is heaven like? It is a place of rejoicing, everlasting life, and worship. It is a place where God and Christ get the glory.

What is going to make heaven so great is the fact that everyone will have one hero. We all know who that hero will be. No one will argue about who is or who is not a hero. No one stands up and says, "Well, I like Elvis" or "Wasn't John Wayne wonderful?" or "Wasn't so-and-so wonderful?" or "I like Errol Flynn." In heaven, there is only one wonderful person: Jesus Christ. Did you ever stop to think about what a thing it would be if there was a great parade with President Reagan coming down the street? Let's say that the parade was in your hometown, and he knew you personally. He was coming down the street just to see you, and you would turn to the person next to you and say, "I know him, and he knows me. We're friends." That would be quite a scene, man! But someday you're going to be in the bleachers with about 150,000,000 people. Here comes the Hero down the street, and the crowd screams and hollers because all of them know him on a personal basis. It isn't like watching the President come down. It is like watching the One who loved you and that you loved more than anyone else. When He comes down you and He will have a personal, vested interest. He's mine and not just the crowd's. You say, "How will that work?" I don't know *how* it will work, but I can't wait!

What is heaven like? Heaven is a place of worship. Heaven is a place of eternal life. Heaven is a place of rejoicing. Heaven is a place that is everlasting: it never gives out.

What is hell like? Well, in the Bible, hell is a place of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. In the Bible hell is a *place*. Hell is *not* a state of mind. You say, "Where is hell?" A man once said to a Christian, "If hell is around, where is it?" The Christian replied,

“Hell is at the end of a Christ-rejecting life.” That is a good answer. However, I do know what the Bible says about it. The Bible says that hell is in the center of the earth. Hell is in the *heart* of the earth. Do you want to see where hell is? Open the strata and keep going down. After a while, it will begin to get warm and eventually will get hot. Do you know where hell is? It’s right under your feet. The Bible says, **“Thought they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them”** (Amos 9:2). **“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell”** (Deut. 32:2). Jonah said, **“Out of the belly of hell cried”** (Jonah 2:2). Where was Jonah? He was in the belly of the whale. He said that the whale went down to the bottom of the mountains. What does the Bible say in Acts 2? His soul was not left in hell. What does the Bible say in Ephesians 4? He descended into the lower parts of the earth. There never has been any question about where hell is. Hell is under your feet.

Why do people go to hell? They think that they are more righteous than God. People don’t go to hell for committing murder. Moses was a murderer; he didn’t go to hell. People don’t go to hell for adultery. David committed adultery; he didn’t go to hell. People don’t go to hell for cursing and swearing. Peter cursed and swore and went to heaven. People don’t go to hell for lying. David lied about his condition before Achish, king of Gath, and went to heaven. Do you know why people go to hell? They go to hell because they think that they are more righteous and holy than God. You say, “Ruckman, you’re not talking to me. I don’t think that.” Let’s see if you do or not. Let me ask you something. What are you counting on right now to keep you out of hell? You don’t want to go there, do you? Is there anyone reading this that *wants* to go to hell? I never met a man in my life that believed in hell that wanted to go there. Who would want to go to a place like that? If you don’t want to go there, what are you trusting to keep you out? “Well, Brother Ruckman, I live a pretty good....” That’s your problem. “I live a pretty good life. I do... I think... I, I, I, I, I...” The trouble with you is that you think that you are more righteous than God. The Bible says, **“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”** (Rom. 10:3–4). God is showing us what a righteous man is, and it isn’t you or me. Do you want to go to heaven? Trust Jesus Christ. Do you want to go to hell? Trust yourself. That is all there is to it.

Why is there a hell? There’s a hell because God is holy. I don’t understand all of that. I don’t understand why God would let a man burn forever and ever and ever because of his sins. I know that He’ll do it. I also know that He doesn’t want a man to do it. I know that the Bible says that the Lord is **“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Pet. 3:9), but He will let a man go. Why does someone go to hell? They go because they will not admit that their own righteousness will not save them.

Who goes to hell? The Bible says that all adulterers, all whoremongers, whoever loves and makes a lie, the unbelieving, and the fearful **“shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”** (Rev. 21:8). That covers a pretty good gamut. People that are afraid to trust Christ as their Saviour, are afraid of men, fear what men think of them, fear what men think about their conversion, and reject Christ

because of the fear of man go to hell. Adulterers, whoremongers, and all liars who love and make a lie go to hell. They go to hell. There are people in hell right now that you would not believe were in hell unless you read your Bible.

Let's take a trip down to hell. Let's lift up the sedimentary rock and the metamorphic rock and cut down through the igneous rock into the bowels of the earth. We'll get down about five hundred miles and start to get a little warm. Dig deeper, say to about five thousand miles, and there is a lake of fire and a terrible noise in your ears. Did you ever hear a real forest fire? It *roars*. In a fire storm, like the bombing of Hamburg and Dresden in World War II, the breath of it will kill you. When it gets going, it sounds like a kettle drum. There is a passage in the Old Testament about it; it's called Tophet. What does "Tophet" mean? It means "the place of the drums." It's a roar. Did you ever hear a blast furnace? It's like that. Do you know what you find when you get to hell? It stinks like sulphur. The Bible calls it brimstone. It's a smell like rotten eggs. That place will be full of the screaming and crying of the damned. They will be weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth just like the Book says.

In hell, I find a fellow who is bent over in the fire washing his hands in the lake of fire. He lifts up his hands, and there's no water on them—only flames. He puts his hands in the flames, lifts them back out, and sticks them back in again. I come up to him and say, "How long have you been here?" He answers, "Almost two thousand years." "What are you trying to do?" I ask. He replies, "I'm trying to get this blood off my hands." "I see. You're a murderer. You killed someone. Is that right?" I ask. He solemnly answers, "No. I never killed anyone." Puzzled, I ask him. "Why are you washing your hands? Why are you trying to get the blood off your hands if you haven't killed anyone?" He says, "My name is Pontius Pilate." He can't get the blood off his hands.

I go further and see a young man there who is around twenty-five years old. I hear him screaming, wailing, gnashing his teeth, weeping, and cursing, and say, "You must have been some kind of terrible character. I suppose you must have been a bank robber or a rapist or a sex murderer." He answers, "No. I never did. I never did. I honored my father and mother. I never lied, I never stole, I kept the commandments from my youth up." I say, "I know who you are. You're that rich young ruler from Luke 18." Christ told that fellow, "**Yet lackest thou one thing.**" One lack will finish you off.

You say, "Brother Ruckman, I don't like to hear about those things. I'm going to shut my ears, and I'm not going to believe that God could be that way." All right, then, you bought your ticket. Get on the train and go. Do you know what the trouble is? You think that you are right, and you're not right. In the end it is a contest of egos, boy. It is either that the great "I AM" is *you* or the great "I AM" is the *Lord Jesus Christ*. If there is one thing that I have learned, it is the fact that the "I AM" down here is soon to be an "IT WAS." The great "**I AM**" is up in heaven. You talk about these things, and Americans shudder. "It's too horrible to think about. I just won't think about it. I'll close it out of my mind." Mind over matter, huh? That old stuff? You're going to get it out of your mind and think that if it isn't in your mind it just won't be there. It *will* be there. There's weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

I come through the fire and see a fellow floating in the first who can't get comfortable.

He walks in it and can't get comfortable. He submerges himself in it and can't get comfortable. I hear him screaming and wailing and gnashing his teeth and cursing God. I say to him, "Boy, you must have been some sort of terrible character. What did you do? Did you cup up a woman's body in fifteen pieces with a butcher knife? Did you take a little baby and thrash its head on a tree?" He said, "No, I was a preacher." I say, "You must have been one of those preachers like Jim Jones or something." "No, he replied, "I was a healing evangelist. I raised the dead. I had the apostolic signs. I was an apostle." I say, "I know who you are. You're Judas. You're Judas Iscariot." Judas healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out devils (Matt. 10). He was sent out two-by-two, but he wasn't saved.

Whatever you do, don't go to hell. You'll never forgive me. You'll never forgive God. If you are sitting there and have never been saved, **"behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"** (2 Cor. 6:2). There'll be a time when you are knocking on the gate of heaven and wondering why you are denied entrance. There can only be one reason. You will be trusting your church, your religion, your mother, your father, or your religious experience. Do you know what you had better trust, if that Book is right? You know me; when I say that, I have no doubt in my mind. I have no conscience at all about what I am saying. I am just as sure as I am that I am alive that if you have God's righteousness when you die you'll go to heaven and if you don't, you will go to hell. I didn't write the Book, I didn't make it up, and I wasn't taught it by man but by the revelation of that Book. That Book will say just what I am telling you. It is clear through that Book from cover to cover.

Now, let's get out of this place and come up topside. Let's get out through the stratosphere, the ionosphere, and the exosphere and get on up to heaven. When we get there, we see a city, New Jerusalem, twelve hundred miles square, like a pyramid, and twelve hundred miles high. I look at that place and see a great big cloud in front of that city. There is a gatekeeper and one of those pearly gates.

At about that time, I notice a traveler who comes up to one of those gates and knocks. The angel at the gate says, "Password?" The traveler says, "I am Dr. Morgan of Morgan, Morgan, Morgan, and Sons. You can let me in; it's rather late." The angel says, "Password?" The man replies, "I'm afraid I don't understand, my good man; I'm a twentieth-century man. I don't believe in all of this superstitious type of thing like 'password.' You can open the gate. I'm Dr. Morgan of Morgan, Morgan, Morgan, and Sons. I'm a noted Wall Street broker, and I have worked with them for years. I'm in *Who's Who in Education* and *Who's Who in American Finance* and *Who's Who in American Business*. I'm a member of the Elks, the Masons, the Kiwanis, the Mooses, the Owls, the Bats, and the Buzzards. You can open the door." "Password?" He can't get in. A whirlwind picks up that old sinner, and out he goes over the rim of eternity down a billion miles into the lake of fire.

Here comes another fellow walking up dressed in a long white robe with a bunch of beads hanging around his neck. He's holding a crooked shepherd's staff in his hand. He comes up to the gate and knocks. The angels says, "Password?" He answers, "I beg your pardon, my good man. I'm the vicar of Christ. You may open the door. They're all waiting for me in there." "Password?" "Password?! Why, my dear man, I am the vicar of Christ. I

am the prince of the apostles, the Holy Father. You may open the door.” “Password?” That old sinner can’t get in. The whirlwind comes along and drops him into hell.

Here comes another one. A lady walks up to the gate and looks over the rim of the cloud and sees that lake of fire and mops her brow. She declares, “Oh, dear me!” as she knocks on the gate. The angels says, “Password?” She indignantly answers, “My dear man, I am Mrs. Smithers. I am the president of the Ladies’ Aid Society and the Vice Secretary of the Bridge Club. I am the Secretary of the Flower Club. They all know me in the social circles. My husband gave a great deal of money to the United Cerebral Palsy Fund and the United Way. You can open the door.” Unimpressed, the angel answers, “Password?” “My good man, I am an Episcopalian. I was reared Episcopalian. I have been christened and have a godfather and a godmother. Open the door!” “Password?” She can’t get in. Off she goes in the whirlwind into the lake of fire.

Another fellow comes up the pathway over the clouds. He looks shabbily dressed and looks like a bum from the rescue mission. He looks at the gate and, when he sees that impregnable wall, breaks out in a cold sweat. He looks at that wall ninety feet high and then goes over to the edge of the cloud and looks down into the lake of fire. He goes back over and knocks on the gate. The angels says, “Password?” The fellow steps back at the door and says, “Let me in! My mother is in there. That’s heaven; that’s New Jerusalem. My mother is there. I never did make fun of hell. I was reared by a Christian mother, and she prayed for me. I don’t want to burn in hell. I don’t want to go to hell. Mama! Mama! Mama....” Off he goes into that fiery lake.

Another fellow comes up to the gate and knocks. The angel says, “Password?” The fellow cups his hand to his mouth and loudly cries, “I’m just a poor sinner, but all of my sins are under the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.” That angel says, “Open the gate.” That old boy steps in there, and the light hits him like a freight train coming out of a round house. He blinds his eyes and strains to look inside. About that time, he feels his flesh changing like it’s turning into gold or something. He takes another step, and there is bleacher after bleacher and tier after tier of the saints waving and shouting. About that time coming down from the throne, here comes the One with the nail-scarred hands and the thorn-pierced brow. He always would come down. He’s come down anytime. He comes walking down there, holds out His hands, and says, **“Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”**

Do you know something? If that Bible is right, and I have no doubt about it, there are many poor, damned sinners in the lake of fire right now looking with the eye of faith like Stephen into heaven. Through that smoke, torment, and brimstone, they see a heavenly city over their heads 100 billion light years away. They hear the sounds of the redeemed floating down from New Jerusalem. Down in hell they are saying, “If I had only trusted Christ. If I had only trusted Christ. If I had only trusted Christ.” If, if, if, if, if, if, if...! It’s too late. Don’t let it be too late for you.

Would You Like to Know How to be Saved?

Those of you who have read this book are faced with a choice: to respect and believe what the Bible says, or to reject the word of God as unimportant and ignore it. Ultimately, your fate is entirely up to you: whether you wish to go to heaven, or whether you wish to remain lost in your sins and hell bound.

The final question is this: Where will you spend eternity?

- (1) Living with God in a perfect universe forever (Heaven).
- (2) Burning with Satan in fire and brimstone forever (Hell).

These are the only two options presented in the Bible, and the Bible has never been wrong about anything. If you wish to live with God, then you have to accept His terms.

Since you, as a human being, cannot make yourself holy (“Not by works of righteousness which we have done...” Titus 3:5), the Lord is ready to give you His Righteousness (His Goodness) instead. His Righteousness is contained in Jesus Christ, who went to the Cross “to be sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus Christ came to save you from hell when He suffered for your sin on the cross. If you receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then you receive perfect Righteousness and Holiness, so that you can please God and be acceptable in His sight. Any other attempt to gain God’s acceptance will not work. God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). That means you have to give up your old way of thinking and living, and turn to God. The Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). That is the invitation. Neither your “church,” your “baptism,” nor your “good works” can save you: you must trust Jesus Christ alone, by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9). It’s very simple. Wherever you are, bow your head and pray a simple prayer something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and unless you save me, I am lost forever. I now come to you, the best way I know how, and ask you to save me. I receive you as my Saviour and trust you to forgive and justify me, and present me without fault before God’s throne in the day of Judgment.”

If you have done this, then you have made the greatest decision of your life. Don’t be ashamed of this decision. “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 10:11). You should find a Bible-believing church and start attending that you may grow (2 Peter 3:18). Also begin to read your Bible (Authorized King James Version) daily and talk to God in prayer. God has given you a brand new life (2 Corinthians 5:17); live it for Him.

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