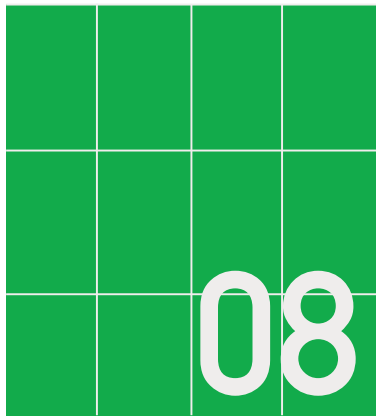




PARADISE RESTORED

Hope's Glorious Homecoming

I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Hope Channel. My name is _____ and I'll be your host for the series *There is More to Life*.

In this series of eight studies, we are exploring the foundational beliefs of Christianity from a biblical point of view. From the origins of the Bible to salvation and what happens when we die, our time together will be a time of discovery and learning, guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

Today, we'll explore the subject of the New Earth. We'll approach this subject by asking: Is Heaven a real place? What does the Bible say about it? Who is going to Heaven?

Let us open our hearts to rediscover the richness of God's Word. We begin with a word of prayer:

"Heavenly Father, we come before You with open hearts, longing to hear Your voice through Your Word. Fill our minds with understanding and our spirits with wisdom. May Your truth guide us, Your love inspire us, and Your presence transform us. Teach us to walk in Your light and to reflect Your grace to the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

II. MAIN ARGUMENT

Did you know that the word "heaven" is one of the most used words in the Bible? It appears 327 in the Old Testament and 255 times in the New for a total of 682 times in the entire Bible.

But is "heaven" only an ancient fantasy? Is Heaven real?

The Bible leaves no doubt—heaven is absolutely real.

Heaven is God’s dwelling place, the seat of His throne, where angels and the redeemed worship Him. In Revelation 4, we get a glimpse of this awe-inspiring place: God’s throne surrounded by a rainbow, a sea of glass, and angelic beings praising Him day and night. Heaven is not a vague concept—it’s a real, tangible place.

Jesus Himself confirmed this when He promised His followers,

“In my Father’s house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:2-3).

Heaven isn’t just a distant realm; it’s being with Jesus, experiencing His love and presence forever.

The Bible also calls heaven the “New Jerusalem,” a city of unimaginable beauty.

Revelation 21:2 tells us that the New Jerusalem will descend from Heaven to the newly created Earth.

Imagine this: a city unlike any other, designed by God Himself, shining with His glory.

The New Jerusalem is God’s promise to restore His people and the world. It’s not just a concept or a dream—it’s a real, tangible city prepared for the redeemed, and it represents the culmination of God’s plan of salvation.

Picture a city with streets of gold, gates made of pearl, and the river of life flowing from God’s throne. The city’s walls are made of jasper, its streets of pure, transparent gold, and its gates are massive pearls. The city sparkles with beauty and majesty, reflecting the radiance of God’s glory. Let’s take it all in:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very valuable stone, like a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on the gates, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three

gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb...

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.” (Revelation 21: 10–14; 21–27).

I don't know about you, but I want to live in this city!

But what makes the New Jerusalem truly extraordinary isn't its physical splendor—it's the presence of God! Revelation 21:3–4 gives us one of the most comforting promises in Scripture:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “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. 4 ‘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.”

Heaven is where sorrow ends, and eternal joy begins.

This city will be a place of eternal peace, joy, and connection, where God and His people will live together in perfect harmony.

The New Jerusalem also symbolizes God's ultimate victory over evil. It's a testament to His power, justice, and love, showing that sin, suffering, and death are gone forever.

This city is the final destination for the righteous, the culmination of everything God

has been working toward throughout history. It represents His complete restoration of creation, His eternal presence with His people, and the fulfillment of every promise He has made.

The promise of this amazing city, the New Jerusalem is a reminder of God's faithfulness and the incredible future that awaits those who trust in Him.

So, is heaven real? Yes! It's where God dwells, where Jesus is preparing a place for His followers, and where eternal joy and peace await. It's not just a future hope—it's a reality we can look forward to with confidence.

Isn't that an incredible promise?

Now, let's turn to a darker chapter in our study.

Many people believe that, just like there is a Heaven, there is also a place called "hell", a place of eternal torment in fire.

People believe that, as the saved will be taken to heaven, the wicked will be thrown into hell to suffer forever for their sins.

Is that really what the Bible teaches?

Let's take a closer look.

The Bible does not describe hell as a literal place of unending conscious torment. Instead, the Bible uses symbolic language to portray the final judgment of the wicked. We call them "metaphors".

The Oxford Dictionary defines "metaphor" as:

"a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable."

and

"a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, especially something abstract."

One of the most common metaphors Jesus used is "Gehenna".

Gehenna was a valley outside Jerusalem where trash and refuse were burned. Gehenna wasn't a mystical place—it was a physical location that Jesus used to explain eternal destruction, not eternal suffering.

In Revelation 20:14-15, we also see the symbol of a “lake of fire,” where the Devil and his followers are thrown.

This symbol is powerful, but it does not describe a real, physical place somewhere in the universe. Instead, it symbolizes the final and complete destruction of sin and sinners. Malachi 4:1-3 paints a vivid picture of this:

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty.

Notice how this passage is full of symbolic language: the day is compared to a “furnace,” the wicked to “stubble” and “branches” and the righteous to “well-fed calves.”

The same is true for other passages describing the fate of the wicked.

A similar passage is found in Matthew 3:12.

“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Notice again how the passage about the judgment on the wicked is filled with symbolism: God is portrayed as a farmer with a fork in his hand, storing wheat in a barn and burning the chaff in fire. Chaff is quickly consumed in this fire and disappears, symbolizing the eradication of sin and those who chose to live apart from God.

Another word that refers to symbolic imagery is the Greek word “*hades*”.

The word *hades* appears ten times in the New Testament. The word originates

from ancient Greek mythology and refers to the realm of the dead or the grave. Its etymology is commonly linked to the Greek root “a-” (not) + “idein” (to see), meaning “the unseen” or “invisible realm.”

In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, Hades translates the Hebrew “*sheol*” which was the symbolic place where all the dead lived.

For example, in Matthew 16:18, Jesus declares:

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

In this passage, *hades* symbolizes the power of death, which cannot prevail against Christ’s church.

Hades also appears in Luke 16:23, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus:

“In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.”

This story has given rise to misconceptions about the fate of the wicked. However, parables are rarely based on reality and this parable is no different.

The story is clearly symbolic; it describes *hades* as a place of suffering right next to Heaven, where Abraham lives, and both places can see and communicate with each other. There is no other mention of these ideas anywhere in Scripture because they are **symbolic**.

In the book of Revelation, *hades* is always accompanied by “death” forming the expression “death and *hades*”, evidently because they are synonymous.

Revelation promises that “Death and Hades” are under the dominion of Jesus Christ:

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” (Rev 1:18).

In Revelation 6:8, a rider of a pale horse is named Death and is accompanied by Hades.

Revelation 20:13-14 declares that on the last day, *hades* will ultimately cast into the lake of fire, symbolizing the final destruction of death and the grave. This also means that *hades* and the lake of fire cannot be the same thing.

“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Notice how the judgment on the wicked is not called “eternal torment” but “second death.” The “second death” is the death from which there is no return.

Lastly, Romans 6:23 reinforces this by saying,

“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Eternal life is the promise for the righteous, while eternal death—the second death—is the ultimate consequence for those who reject God’s gift of salvation.

The wicked’s fate highlights God’s justice and mercy. By ending sin and its effects forever, He ensures His creation will be a place of peace, righteousness, and joy. Eternal torment doesn’t align with God’s character of love and fairness. The saved would never have peace in Heaven, knowing that many of the people they knew on Earth were burning up forever and never getting consumed. Instead, the end of the wicked is eternal separation from God and eternal death, emphasizing that God’s justice is always balanced with His mercy.

In summary, the fate of the wicked is eternal death—not eternal life in fiery torment. Romans 6:23 reminds us that “the wages of sin is death,” not unending suffering. This ultimate punishment brings sin and its consequences to an end, allowing God’s universe to be restored to peace and righteousness.

So, does “hell” exist? Not as a place of eternal conscious torment. The Bible speaks of a final judgment where sin and sinners are destroyed forever, paving the way for a universe free from pain, suffering, and evil.

Why is it important that there is no eternal torment in a fiery hell?

Because God is love, even in judgment. We humans would not condemn criminals to eternal punishment in fire, much less God! He acts with justice and mercy. Eternal

torment doesn't align with a God who is compassionate and just. Instead, His judgment is about bringing closure to the problem of sin and restoring harmony to His creation.

Isn't it comforting to know that God's justice is rooted in love? Isn't it a relief to know that your loved ones are not suffering right now in fiery torment?

God's judgment of humanity isn't about vengeance or punishment for its own sake—it's about purifying creation from sin and its consequences.

This truth offers hope: sin will not last forever. God's victory will bring about a universe where love and righteousness reign eternally.

Now, let's move on to more sunny truths of Scripture.

The Bible also reveals that this final judgment is part of God's plan to restore creation. 2 Peter 3:10 affirms that the earth will be destroyed by fire, paving the way for a New Earth free from sin, suffering, and death.

The fire that destroys the wicked and eradicates sin will also purify the Earth, clearing the way for God to create a perfect, sinless world. The New Earth will be a place where righteousness dwells, where God's presence is fully realized, and where His original purpose for creation is restored.

After the destruction of the wicked, an incredible transformation will take place on Earth: it will be made new, and the redeemed will inherit the kingdom of God forever, living in perfect harmony with Him.

In this new creation, all traces of sin will be gone. Revelation 21:4 promises that God

“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.”

The redeemed will live in a world free from fear, suffering, and sorrow, rejoicing in the eternal peace and joy from being in God's presence.

Revelation 21:5 captures God's declaration of hope: ***“Behold, I am making everything new!”*** This promise isn't just about physical renewal—it's a complete restoration of everything lost through sin. The redeemed will experience life as God

intended, filled with love, purpose, and an unbroken connection with Him.

In this new Earth, the redeemed will live without barriers or separation from God. Revelation 22:3-4 says,

“The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.”

This personal relationship with God is the fulfillment of His original purpose for humanity.

After the destruction of the wicked, the universe will be restored to perfect harmony, where God’s love reigns supreme, and the redeemed will dwell with Him forever.

It’s a future filled with hope, peace, and eternal joy. Don’t you want to be part of this glorious future?

As we close our study today, let me tell you a story.

Ellen was a teenager in the 1840s. She and her family were faithful Methodists who had recently rediscovered the truth of the Second Coming of Jesus.

After much Bible study, she and her fellow believers concluded that Jesus would return in 1844. More precisely, on October 22, 1844.

When that special day came, Ellen spent the day in prayer, singing, and joyful expectation, longing to see her Savior appear in the clouds.

She clutched her Bible, her heart pounding with excitement. Every fiber of her being believed that tonight was the night Jesus would return, and she would go to Heaven. The promise was clear—the prophecies had been studied, the calculations made. All that remained was to witness the heavens open and hear the trumpet sound.

This was the day they would meet their blessed Jesus and finally be welcomed into the New Jerusalem.

Soon, the sun dipped below the horizon, painting the sky in hues of orange and purple. Inside homes, barns, and meeting halls across America, the air was thick with expectation.

Thousands of men, women, and children stood together, their faces lit with the glow of lanterns and hope.

Their hope in the Second Coming had been so sure that many had sold their farms, closed their businesses, and given away their earthly possessions, convinced they would not need them after this night.

However, as the night wore on and Jesus did not come, deep sorrow and disappointment settled over the believers.

As the hours stretched on, prayers turned to murmurs, and the melodies of hymns turned to silence. Midnight came. Then, dawn.

The sky remained unbroken. The fields looked the same. The world, untouched.

Jesus had not come.

The silence of the morning after was unbearable. Some wept. Some fell to the ground in grief. Others turned away in anger, feeling betrayed by what they had believed so deeply.

Ellen's heart ached. Everything she had placed her faith in felt like it had crumbled beneath her feet. Had she been wrong? Had God abandoned them?

The following days and weeks were devastating for Ellen.

Her world seemed to spin with the weight of shattered expectation. The laughter of scoffers filled the air as they mocked the once-bold believers. Newspapers ridiculed the "foolishness" of those believers.

Yet, even in her sorrow, Ellen could not let go of her belief in Jesus. Something inside her whispered that God was still working, even though she couldn't yet see how.

And so, she prayed.

"Lord, what now? What do we do?"

Many abandoned their belief in Christ's soon return and joined the unbelievers, but Ellen, along with a small group of believers, clung to their faith, convinced that the error was in their understanding, not in God's promises.

A few weeks later, Ellen joined a small group of believers in prayer. Their numbers had dwindled, but their hearts still clung to the hope that God had not forsaken them. As they knelt together, something remarkable happened.

Ellen felt a deep sense of peace wash over her.

She realized that God had not abandoned them. He was not calling them to despair but to prepare. To go deeper, to seek Him more fully, and to proclaim the gospel to the world.

The delay of the Second Coming was not a denial—Jesus' return was still certain because he had promised.

Ellen became a messenger of hope, encouraging the faithful remnant not to lose heart.

Through years of trials, hardships, and struggles, Ellen clung to this hope. She would go on to become a powerful voice for the gospel, urging believers to remain steadfast, to keep their eyes on Jesus, and to prepare for His soon return and the New Jerusalem.

Ellen's story isn't just about an event in America in the 1840s. It's about all of us.

Have you ever waited on God for something, only to feel like He didn't show up?

Have you ever experienced disappointment so deep that it made you question everything?

Have you ever felt mocked or ridiculed for your faith?

Maybe you've prayed for healing that didn't come. Maybe you've hoped for a breakthrough that never materialized. Maybe you've felt let down by God in ways you can't put into words.

But here's what Ellen's story teaches us:

God is never late—He is always on time. Even when we don't understand, He is working out His plan.

Delays are not denials. What may seem like disappointment is often God preparing something greater.

Hope is never lost when it is anchored in Jesus.

Jesus is still coming. Heaven is real! The New Jerusalem will soon open its doors for the redeemed. His light still leads the way. And as long as we keep our eyes on Him, we will never be lost.

Will you trust God even when you don't understand?

Will you keep your eyes on Jesus, no matter what trials come?

Will you hold onto the promise of His return, just as she did?

If your faith has been shaken, let today be the day you anchor it in God's unchanging truth.

Let's pray:

“Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us that You are always faithful. Even when we don't understand, even when we face disappointment, help us to keep our eyes on Jesus. Strengthen our faith, fill us with Your hope, and lead us to be a light to the world. May we be found faithful when You return. In Jesus' name, Amen.”