

The Final States

- Just as the Bible tells us how it all began, it also tells us about the final states.
- It will in eternal life for those who are in Christ and eternal death for those who are not in Christ.
 - The description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 gives a small taste of the beauty we can expect. Why is heaven special based on God's presence if God is omnipresent?
 - It is important to note the difference between God's localized presence and His omnipresence. His localized presence is where He manifests Himself in His glory. His localized presence was in the Garden, the Holy of Holies, and is in the third heaven.
 - It is the localized presence that sinful humans cannot enter, otherwise they will die. It was this presence that Isaiah saw glimpse of in Isaiah 6 and then cried, "Woe is me." It is there that John saw multitudes of angels and men praising God with the trizagios – the three shouts of the word holy in a repetitious manner.
 - Revelation 21 shows God's localized presence will fill the whole universe.

Heaven

- When we enter the final state and are in the localized presence of God, there are three things the Bible likens this to: rest, worship, and service. The book of Hebrews speaks of us entering into God's rest in 4:9-11.
 - Heb 4:9-11 A Sabbath rest remains, therefore, for God's people. (10) For the person who has entered His rest has rested from his own works, just as God did from His. (11) Let us then make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall into the same pattern of disobedience.
 - Rest does not mean a cessation of activities, but instead refers to the experience of reaching a goal of crucial importance. For example, in Genesis 2 we learn that God rested on the 7th day, meaning creation was completed.
 - Yet, His work as God has not ceased as He carried out redemption and sustains the created order from entropy.
 - So entering God's rest may refer to us reaching the goal for which we were created. People should not get the idea that heaven is a place where no work is done.



Heaven

- Related to the rest is worship and service to God.
- Concerning worship, the scenes of heaven from the book of Revelation show people falling down before God and worshipping Him constantly.
 - Some humans have this notion that worshipping God all of the time would be boring, but it is because they have no clue who God is.
 - Just one sliver of God's majesty could amaze us and keep us in awe and wonder for eternity.
- Concerning service, Jesus told His disciples that they will judge along side Him.
 - What is involved in this judging is not clear, but it is service or work done on behalf of the king.
 - It is speculated that man will be restored to a similar dominion to that which was exercised in the Garden prior to the Fall. Some look to the parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 where the reward for faithful work was the greater opportunity for more work as a glimpse of what service will be like in heaven.



Heaven

- There is also the question as to whether or not there will be physical pleasure in heaven.
 - Well, if people have sex in mind, then the answer is no. Jesus said there is no marriage there.
 - If people have eating and drinking in mind, then yes this is implied in Scripture.
 - One thing we need to understand is that heaven is where and how we get to enjoy eternity.
- I suppose related to this is the question as to what we will remember in heaven. We have to plead ignorance on these matters.
 - Marriage family units are dissolved as Jesus made clear to the Sadducees that tried to trap him on the resurrection and marriage issue.
 - Then again, the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration which demonstrates there is personal identity and recognition.
 - We might not remember our sins or past failures, and anything that causes us to weep since that will be wiped away from us.



Heaven

- Here's what we can say for sure.
- There will be a total renewal of the entire creation.
 - Romans 8:21-23 – that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. ²³ Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
 - God subjected the world to futility because of Adam's sin, but it will be completely and perfectly renewed.



Heaven

- This may involve the destruction of the current cosmos, followed by its renewal (2 Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 21).
- These two passages seem to indicate that God will completely destroy what is now in existence, and then make a new heavens and earth.
- Other passages emphasize that it is a renewal through a destruction. It is not a complete destruction, but a purging of all sinful and fallen elements of this world, thereby renewing the universe resulting in a new heaven and new earth.
- Tragically, no confession of faith in Protestantism (or RCC or EO) ever mentions the New Heaven and Earth. Our ultimate hope is to be with Jesus (not as disembodied souls, nor even just in bodies for a millennium) as embodied people in the New Heaven and Earth.
- I encourage people to do an in-depth study of Rev 21:1—22:5.



Hell

- Just as there will be a final reward, there will also be a final judgment.
- To many today, the doctrine of everlasting punishment appears to be an outmoded or sub-Christian view.
 - Liberal and postmodern thought has caused many Christians to try to demythologize the notion of everlasting punishment.
 - In the same way that demythologization attempts to write off angels and demons, it also does so with the doctrine of Hell.
- In the end, people do not wish to embrace the whole view of God as portrayed in His holy scriptures, but instead they seek to pit God's love against His holiness.
 - Most of us have heard something like, "A loving God would not condemn people to Hell." The problem with this is that Hell is clearly taught in the Scriptures.
- We read of eternal fire, punishment, torment, darkness, destruction, and exclusion. It is a horrific picture of the condition of the wicked. And worst of all, it is the total absence from the presence of God (Rev 20:12-15).

Hell

- Rev 20:12-15 I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. (13) Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. (14) Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
- The implications are quite clear. A person's eternal fate is sealed the instant they physically die.
 - There are no more chances for repentance. As with the rich man in Luke 16, the moment he died he was in Hades and there was nothing that could be done for him.
 - Eventually he will be resurrected, only to be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire. When putting all of the scriptural data together, there is no indication anywhere that there will be an opportunity for belief after a temporary period of judgment.
- Thus, there is no second chance, and this itself is hardest part for corrupted man to accept.

Universalism

- Just as there will be a final reward, there will also be a final judgment.
- There are three challenges that oppose this teaching of eternal, conscious punishment of the wicked: universalism, conditional immortality, and annihilationism.
- Universalism emphasizes the wideness of God's mercy (Rom 5:18; 1 Cor 15:22).
 - Rom 5:18 – So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.
 - This states all fallen human beings (for some, even demons), will ultimately enjoy eternal life.
 - Concerning human beings, it says all humans have been elected.
 - This will take place either immediately after death, or after a period of post-mortem punishment. Then they will be given a second opportunity to repent and will do so. The alleged Scriptural justification for this are the passages above.
 - Pinnock talks about the expanding mercy of God. These passages need to be read in context, and doing so undoes the universalist interpretation. This is an unbiblical position and has been historically condemned by the church.