

“The Next Chapter: The Truth about Heaven and Hell” // Revelation 21–22 // *The Whole Story #44*

Good news: DPAC is just around the corner. Bad news. Sold out for every service.

We may be sold out, but check christmasatdpac.com for **details on how** to get tickets to sold out services.

- We **have an exchange service** there... where you can post your need for tickets, or offer tickets you have discovered you can't use.
- **I saw someone on the exchange service** say, “Two atheist friends agreed to come but can't find tickets.” Obviously, you don't want to have tickets sitting on a counter at home, leaving two empty seats that could be occupied by someone like this.
- **If you need tickets...** raise hand, tickets.

I might get burned with this, but I'll say it: If you're **unable to get a ticket, come anyway.** No guarantees, but in 4 years, we have yet to have to turn someone away yet.

- **Or come early to see if there are extra tickets** at the box office or if people just don't show.

Summit, let's pray...

- the event itself
- that lost ppl would accept invites to come

Works Consulted:

Craig Groeschel, “Your End Times”

Ryan Stone, “Outside the Kingdom – Hell”

Tim Lucas, “Revelation in a Nutshell”

Chip Henderson, “The Return of Christ”

Tim Keller, “The New Heavens and New Earth”

Joshua Harris, “How the Story Ends”

- that ppl would be saved
- that ppl would center their Christmas on Jesus

BIBLES! Well, Summit, you've made it! You're at the **last official message of The Whole Story!** We've gone through the whole Bible in a year.

How many of you read through the Bible with us this year, using one of our Bible reading plans? How many of you, that was the 1st time you'd ever done something like that? **For those of you who gave it the old college try**, and didn't make it, good news: we're going to do it again next year!

- One of our pastors was a **Varsity athlete at NC State**, and he said, “*That's our school's athletic motto: Well, there's always next year.*”

Our last message in this series is on heaven and hell—because that's how John concludes **the book of Revelation**, pointing us toward the life that is to come, which **in many ways is far more significant** than the life we've experienced here.

Now, a disclaimer that may disappoint some of you: *I've never actually been to heaven or hell.* It seems there are **plenty of people out there who claim** that they have, and the **best way to publish a best-selling Christian book** is to claim you've been to heaven or hell personally.

(Hold up Bible)... **Now, some of you probably won't like this**, but God does not intend for us to learn about heaven from people today who

claim to have gone. We are supposed to learn about it, as we are all things in the Christian life, from the Word of God. **All that you need** is in *here*.

- You say, ***“Pastor, are you telling us that all those people’s stories aren’t true?”*** I’m not in a position to tell you that.
- I can tell you that **all that you need to know** is in here. Period. **This is the book that Jesus authorized his Apostles to** write. He said, “I’ll make it known to them. And don’t believe everyone else who claims to know stuff.”

In fact, the **book of Revelation** ends this way: **If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book.** (Rev 22:18)

So, with that as our backdrop, **Revelation 21:1**, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also, he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

¹ **Isaac Asimov**, science fiction writer, an agnostic, said this: *“I don’t believe in an afterlife. So, I don’t have to spend my whole life fearing*

Many people have a secret fear about heaven. Namely, It sounds *boring* to them. Like an eternal choir practice, where we prance about in diapers, playing a harp and listening to Morgan Freeman read the dictionary all day. And that sounds more like hell than heaven.

- One **prominent Christian pastor** admitted: “Whenever I think about heaven, it makes me depressed. I’d rather cease to exist when I die. I can’t stand the idea of endless, boring tedium. To me, heaven doesn’t sound much better than hell. I’d rather be annihilated than spend eternity like that.”¹
- *If I asked you to be honest, some of you would admit that you feel that way.*

Well, the Bible gives a **much different picture**—both of the joys of heaven and the torments of hell—*but you have to know how to read the symbolism.*

And **John concludes his Revelation with this vision** because understanding these things will do more to shape your life than perhaps anything else in the Bible.

(Heaven)*

Let’s **talk 1st about heaven**. I’m going to give you **5 words** that describe the vision in these last 2 chapters...

1*. Renewal: (21:1–2)

In vs. 1 John describes a “*new heaven and new earth.*”

- There are two words for “new” in Greek. *Neos* means “brand new;” *kainos* means “remade.” *Kainos* is the word used.

Heaven is **not some new, colorless, ethereal realm**, completely unlike where we are. It is a **renewed, remade heaven and earth.**

hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.”

- If a mechanic told you he picked up an old Corvette from a junkyard and remade it, and he showed it to you, you would not be expecting to see a completely different thing, but a **new flashy, souped-up version** of a Corvette...

That's the same thing that happens with the new heaven and new earth. British theologian **N.T. Wright** says that we get a **glimpse** of this in the resurrection of Jesus, which are called the "**firstfruits**" of the new creation.

- **Firstfruits are the first of the harvest**, which gives you a sampling of what it come after it. That's what Jesus' resurrection was: a glimpse of our future, and the world's future.
- There was **continuity** with the past: He had a body, **people recognized him**. He ate food.
- But his body **didn't have the same limitations**. He flies around. At one point, he apperates into a room.
- N.T. Wright says, "One day God is going to do with the entire cosmos what he had already done with the resurrected Jesus!"
- Jesus' **resurrection is the appetizer** to the full-course meal of restoration; the **trailer to the blockbuster** film of redemption.

In other words, the new heaven and new earth is everything that we loved about the old heaven and earth, minus the curse of sin. Creation's beauties are heightened, its pleasures strengthened, and our limitations removed.

Frankly, Summit, I get **downright giddy sometimes imagining** what that will be like.

- What does the **glorified, heavenly Hawaii** look like? *If what we see now is the cursed version, what's the real one look like?*
- What does a **glorified filet mignon** taste like?
- What is it like to eat at the glorified **Waffle House**?
- How entertaining are glorified movies? Does **Nic Cage** starin every role?

In heaven, we'll experience **pleasure without pain**, beauty untainted by the curse!

- There, **ice cream and cotton candy** are good for you and broccoli makes you gain weight.
- There is a football stadium where the **Panthers win** every single game and you feel like you can depend on Cam Newton.

Tim Keller says **heaven is not so much "pie in the sky" as a "feast on earth."**

BTW, **this ultimate heaven doesn't exist yet**. It's coming, John says, after God destroys the old earth and heaven in the final judgment.

- **You say, "Wait, doesn't the Bible talk about God being in heaven now, or believers who die going to heaven now?"**
- Yes—the Bible refers to heaven as wherever the throne of God is, and to be absent with the body, Paul says, is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8), so believers who have died have gone to heaven, but the current heaven is just a temporary, holding place. It's like a layover.
- (Granted, it's a *great* layover. We're not talking about languishing around in the ATL airport until then... which is like the 7th circle of hell)
 - **Every time I walk through ATL** I feel like I'm in the middle of the zombie apocalypse...

Renewal...

2. Reunion (21:3)

- **Vs. 3 says** "the dwelling place of God will be with man... they shall be his people and God will be with them as their God."
- Heaven is where **God and his people** are reunited together.
- In heaven, we're going to be **reunited with all our loved ones and friends** who died in Jesus.

- **One of God’s purposes in salvation** was to create an eternal family united by a love that never fades, where we never experience heartache and we never have to say goodbye.²

There, Summit, those loved ones in Jesus who have **been taken from us in death** will be restored. I love this verse: **This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "(In that day), I will give the signal and they will carry your little sons back to you in their arms; they will bring your daughters on their shoulders."** (Isa 49:22, NLT) I have to think that means **parents who have lost children**—maybe in an accident, a disease, or a miscarriage—will see that son brought back by the angels in their arms or their lost daughters being carried back to them on their shoulders. **What a day that will be!**

And, of course, the greatest reunion is with God himself, who will permanently be in our midst. Chapter 22 says, **⁴They** (we, believers) **will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.** **⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light...*** (I think **“night” here is more symbolic**, btw, not that the earth will cease rotating... but that the night of fear and sin will be gone.)

- **His presence** will be our constant light.
 - We’ll never feel the darkness of loneliness or abandonment or judgment. We will bask forever in the beauty and glory of his face, radiating with his truth and beauty and love...
- ...and **we will be so intimately connected to him** we’ll have his name tattooed to our heads.
 - **I’m assuming that is symbolic** in some way, but a tattoo signifies a permanent relationship.
 - (My tattoo—she loves it, it means I’m not going anywhere, and I’m not. I told her if she ever leaves me I’m going with her...)

² Ephesians 1:15–22

- Hear this: Heaven’s greatest joy is reunion; and the **greatest reunion** is reunion with God himself, and we will enjoy his eternal and loving and powerful companionship forever and ever, and our **hearts will be so filled** with love and delight for him we won’t know how to contain it.

3. Release (21:4)

⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

- “No pain” means no chronic illness, no aching joints.
- “No tears” means no depression. No fear. No worry. No stress. No misunderstanding. No relational conflicts.
 - No more **Emergency Rooms, Intensive Care Wards, or Chemotherapy Units**.
 - No more Pharmacies or children’s hospitals, or funeral Homes.
 - No more homicide departments, grief counselors, or security guards.
 - No more tax forms or DMV’s.
- God has already saved us from the punishment of sin, but there we will be saved from the power and presence of sin, and ultimately the pain of sin.

This is the final work of salvation. One day, “the same hands that were pierced for you will wipe away every tear from your eyes.”³

We will finally experience life in a world without sin, which may be the greatest overlooked benefit. No sin!

- I’ll finally be able to **look out these eyes** without the selfishness and suspicion and jealousy that so plagues my heart now.
- **What’s it like to be sinless**, to have a pure heart?

³ Josh Harris

Sometimes people ask, “When Jesus wipes away our tears, does that mean we will we not be able to remember what happened on earth?”

No, it means he **transforms our pain into joy.**

Paul uses **two images to talk about how we’ll think about our past pain** once we get to heaven—**internalize them.**

- **Rom 8: Birth.** The pain of creation is like the birth pangs of labor: It’s not that you forget the pain, just that it is almost lost in the joy of the birth!
 - I have a friend who went through brain cancer... It’s **not that we look back and see the reasons** bad things happen and say, ‘Oh... that’s why that happened!’ Rather, we will say, ‘What bad things?’ In that moment, we will be so consumed with God’s finished product we will scarcely remember the process he used!
 - Mother Theresa—my time in a cheap hotel.
 - Quickly **lost** in joy.
- **The other image Paul uses is swallowing:** 1 Cor 15: “Death,” Paul says, “is swallowed up in victory.”
 - **When you swallow something**, it becomes part of you. The food you eat becomes you.
 - **In the same way**, our experiences with pain and death make the end product sweeter and even more beautiful.
- **You’ve probably seen someone you love go through suffering and really grow from it.**
 - Or maybe you see that in your own life; some painful chapter, whose purpose you couldn’t understand at the time, led to some good effect in your life?
- If we can already, with limited time and perspective... don’t you think given infinite time and God’s perspective...
- How’s it going to feel when we get to heaven and see how God used every moment of our lives to weave his **beauty and glory** into us?

J.R.R. Tolkien uses one of the best phrases (a phrase SLJ uses all throughout JSB) – in that moment, on that final day, **“all the sad things on earth will come untrue.”**

- “Come untrue” doesn’t mean we forget about them altogether, but the bad effects in our lives turn into good effects. God takes **painful things** with devastating effects and reweaves them for a good purpose.

But **I love most the account** of Joni Eareckson Tada (a quadriplegic who broke her neck as a teenager in a diving accident, and is now in her 70’s—God used that accident to bring her back to himself), “I hope in some way I can take my wheelchair to heaven. With my new glorified body, I will stand up (from that wheelchair) on resurrected legs, and I will be next to the Lord Jesus. And I will feel those nail prints in his hands, and I will say, ‘Thank you, Jesus!’ He will know I mean it, because he will recognize me from (how hard I leaned on him during my sufferings)... And then I will say, ‘Lord Jesus, do you see that wheelchair over there? Well, you were right. When you put me in it, it was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. I do not think I would ever have known the glory of your grace were it not for the weakness of that wheelchair. So, thank you, Lord Jesus, for that. ...Now, if you like, you can send that thing off to hell.’”

4. Reassignment (22:3)

Like I mentioned at the beginning, **lots of people have this image** of being really bored in heaven, imagining that we sit around all day **strumming harps** and **firing off nerf arrows** into the sky.

But look at how heaven is described in chapter 22: **Revelation 22:3**, “... and his servants will serve him.” **Servants.**

- **What do servants do?** They serve. They aren't bored. They are busy. They're constantly going places, doing things.
- **Work, you see, was part of God's original creation.** (It wasn't added because of the curse.) It was **part of what we did** in Paradise!
 - Which means when God restores the earth, work will be a part of the new creation, too. **Except** that it won't be like it is here, filled with **worry and struggle and toil**.
- God will **assign us each very fulfilling work** in heaven. God knows how you're shaped; how he designed you. He **knows what you love to do**.
 - Maybe you **are already doing it**. Love building buildings. Love inventing or producing or leading.
 - Only **two kinds of jobs we know won't be there**: doctors (because no one is sick) and evangelists (because everyone is saved). **You doctors and seminary students**—we'll have to find something else to do.
- But, suffice it to say: **we won't be bored**. Boredom is part of the curse! It's going away forever. We'll be more fulfilled, more engaged, more entertained and alive-feeling than ever!
 - For some, the first time you'll experience **living according to your calling!** You never found it here, but there you will!

5. Reign (22:5)

- **"...and they will reign forever and ever."** (22:5)
- I'll be honest. I'm **not quite sure over whom**. Some have said angels. Others say it is over creation itself.⁴
 - **C.S. Lewis thought** it might be reigning as kings and queens over other beings in other universes that God created.

⁴ **G.K. Beale** sees two possibilities. He thinks (1) we "reign" in the same way Adam and Eve were to **exercise dominion**—not over people, but over the new earth. Beale also thinks (2) we rule over the **holy angels** (Neh. 9:6, Heb. 2:5-7) **Grant**

- My **favorite part of all *The Chronicles of Narnia*** is how he ends book 7: "So for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."
- I'm **not sure exactly whom we reign over** or how we reign, but I'm looking forward to finding out.
- But the point is: You are destined to be **royalty**. You are **destined to lead, to reign**.
- **You're not destined to be an insignificant**, groveling peon with no importance or responsibility. **God created you to be a reigning Prince or Princess**. So, start acting that way.
 - **I don't mean boss people around**. But carry yourself with the dignity that belongs to the King's family.

Renewal; reunion; release; reassignment; and reign. Before I conclude this section, let me draw out a few things I think this means for us:

A. Put up your bucket list!

- **Bucket lists are all the things you want to do** before you die because you assume you'll never have a chance do them again. That's **NEVER true for the Christian**.
- **When Jesus says that he's making "all things" new**, doesn't that include all the mountains, stars, rivers, oceans, planets, animals, culture, arts, music, architecture and extreme sports that you never got to experience?

Osborne thinks that the reign is mostly metaphorical—not over angels or other people, but just being given **honor and power**. **Alan F. Johnson** thinks there is a relationship of **mutual reigning and serving**, since verse 3 says that the people in this kingdom will *serve*, but they are the same ones that will *reign* in verse 5.

- Does *your Bible* have an asterisk with a list of things in fine print that not included in that contract?
- **All means all, church.**
- For those of you who are single, the joys of marriage and family will be in some way even more greatly fulfilled there.

Rev 21:26 even says that **"They will bring into it the glory and honor of the nations."** (21:26) Which **has to mean the best of culture.** The best Italian food. The best of Arabian and Colonial architecture, which are my favorite. Renaissance paintings. The best of Disneyworld. The best of Mardi Gras (maybe not much, but what's good will be there). So **even the manmade things** we didn't get to experience on earth we'll experience there!

- The **one thing we CAN'T do there that we can do here** is tell *people about Jesus*, so give your life to that, not to pursuing some silly bucket list item you'll experience a better version of in heaven anyway.
- Put **winning people to Jesus** on your bucket list. Not a bucket list, but a gathering a bucket of fish, ought to characterize the last chapters of your life!

B. Stop being depressed about aging!

- Some of you are **really bothered** by this. It depresses you to watch your beauty fade, or to feel your body decline.
- Listen, I get it: **I am 43 now**. I'm already **feeling** this.
 - Sometimes I **wake up in the morning sore**. *All I did the night before was sleep*. Sleeping made me sore. Somehow going from this position () to this one (I) strained my body...
- **Brothers and sisters, good news!** I've got a glorified version of this body waiting.
- Stop being depressed about passing your peak. A **better version** of your mind, your muscles and your beauty awaits.

C. Let's teach our kids to look forward to this!

- **Teach them that for all that they love on earth**, they will have a better and heavenly version of there.
 - When they're **going down a waterslide**, don't say, "Well, enjoy it now, because there isn't going to be any water in heaven, so go learn some Bible verses."
 - Teach them they **have a Heavenly Father of endless goodness** and endless creativity. Help them imagine: What's this **cotton candy** going to be like in heaven?
- People have often asked me if their **dogs will be in heaven**. I used to give what I considered "TOUGH TRUTH": "No, dogs don't have souls so they don't live eternally." Now I say, "You know what? It's a new heaven and a new earth with a healed version of all that we loved down here. So, you figure out what that means."
 - You say, "**How about my cat?**" Don't push it. I'll get to the section on hell in a minute
- **Let's teach our kids that God is the giver of every good and perfect gift**, and that eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has even entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love him, that he is the **giver of every good and perfect gift**, and that **they can trust him in life and in death**.

D. Understand what you are longing for

- C.S. Lewis** once said that the **fact that we long for something beyond the grave** is a strong indication that that thing actually exists.
- **He asked? "Do fish complain of the sea for being wet? Or, if they did, would not that fact strongly suggest that they had not been, or were not destined to be, aquatic creatures?"**
 - **We long to step out of the sea of time onto the land of eternity!" Doesn't that show we were created for eternity? If I find in myself a desire which nothing in this world can satisfy, the best argument is that I was created for another world.**

Listen, **some of you in here struggle to believe**. But I want you to wrestle with the fact that there's something in you that knows that

you were created for more than simply surviving and procreating. That love you feel, the longing for meaning that you have: these are not just illusions created by chemicals in our brains programmed by evolution as survival mechanisms to help us propagate our DNA into the future faster than your neighbor.

Quit telling yourself that it's courageous to embrace that life is meaningless, and realize that it's not so much courageous as it is unnatural and counter-intuitive.

- You long for meaning and eternity because you were created with meaning by an eternal God, and you will be satisfied only in relationship to him: ***“If I find in myself a desire which nothing in this world can satisfy, the best argument is (not that my brain had evolved an illusion of consciousness) that I was created for another world.”***

Well, as much as I want to, I can't end this message talking only about heaven. Because John includes in this final vision a glimpse of the other destination—hell. And we ignore it to our peril.

You see, most people think the default destination is heaven—that you'll go there unless we mess something up. The Bible presents a different picture.

(Hell)

So let's go back to where we left off in Revelation 21:

(8) But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

As I get into this, I think of the words of Charles Spurgeon: “These are such weighty things, such that when I dwell upon them, I feel far

more inclined to sit down and weep than to stand up and speak to you.”

Three things about hell we learn from these last two chapters:

1. Hell is an eternal place of torment

- The **images are awful**. *Fire, burning sulfur, eternal death.*
- I told you a few weeks ago that there is **some question as to what is metaphor** and **what is literal** in Revelation.
 - But, like I told you a couple of weeks ago, even if these things are symbols, they point to a terrible reality...
 - **In Revelation, the reality is always more terrible than the symbol.** The symbol is just the closest earthly representation to the terrible reality..
 - **Whatever they are pointing to** is unspeakably awful.
- **People say, “Is it really eternal?”** I have to assume so, because the same word that is used for “everlasting life” is used for “everlasting death,” and the smoke of their torment goes on forever and ever.

Jonathan Edwards, 18th century American theologians, says, “If you take these things seriously, you have to... ***“Imagine yourself cast into a fiery oven, glowing with heat... And imagine that your body was going to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, inside and out—feeling every fiber of it the whole time. What horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! If it was measured by an hourglass, how slowly would the time seem to go! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had another fourteen left. But what if you knew you must lie there, enduring that torment in its fullness for 24 hours? How much greater, even, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year? How much greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years? But wouldn't your***

*heart sink if you knew you must bear it forever and ever? That there would be **no** end? That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end than before...and that you should never, never be rescued. **But your torment in hell will be immeasurably greater than this.** How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable! How your heart and soul would sink in such a case."*

People sometimes say, "But how is that fair? An eternity in hell for only 70 years of sin?" Sin gains its wickedness by the one it's committed against.

- **TOLD YOU BEFORE: Punch a wall.../dog/woman/approach the Queen of England with your fists raised and something worse than jail may happen.** Sin gains its wickedness by whom the sin is directed against.
- **Sin against an infinitely holy God is infinitely wicked; sin against an eternal God warrants eternal punishment.**
- ***It's not the duration of the crime, but the dignity of the one against whom it was committed that determines the severity of the punishment.***

You say, "Well, why can't God just let it go?" **Because he is just.** Justice is the foundation of his universe (Ps 89:14). And **justice demands restitution** in some way.

- We hate it when we see justice aborted, don't we?
- **Think about how angry people** get when we see a court decision we really disagree with, where we feel someone gets away with gross injustice. (For some of you, it's **OJ Simpson**, or **George Zimmerman**).
- God will ultimately right all wrongs and restore justice to the universe. And that's what hell is.

You say, "**Well why doesn't God do something about it!**" He has—he has put on Jesus the punishment for your sin. Two ways to pay for sin: the eternal Son of God can die for it, or you can pay for it eternally.

But if you won't have receive his invitation, there is no other alternative.

In the end, you say to God, "Thy will be done, or he says to you, "Thy will be done!"

Which leads me to the 2nd thing...

2. Hell is a door locked from the inside (22:11)

Notice **what the angel says** about hell in **Revelation 22:11** (This **might be one of the most illuminating** verses in Scripture about hell) - "**Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.**"

The **people in hell never repent.** They remain filthy; they remain haters of God's authority. Their **hearts remain unjust** and corrupted. It's a door locked from the inside.

- **Yes, they hate the torment,** but they hate the **authority of God more.**
 - **C.S. Lewis** in *the Great Divorce* describes a bus trip from hell to heaven, where the people from hell who get into heaven hate it and want to go back to hell.⁵
- **Friedrich Nietzsche:** said he'd rather go into nothingness than surrender his will to the God of the Bible.

Some theologians have said this is what is being communicated by the image of eternal fire and the worm that never dies.

⁵ **John Paul Sartre**, in his play *No Escape...* depicts hell with the door open, and no one leaves.

- **Fire represents insatiable desire.**⁶ Leave a fire unchecked and it continues to grow.
- That's what sin is like if we don't receive Jesus' invitation to save us.
- Lewis says: "Hell begins with a grumbling mood always complaining, bitterness always blaming others."⁷
 - At first it feels like something distinct from you, that you can criticize in yourself and keep contained and stop when you want. But if you leave it unchecked, it grows and grows until it consumes you—and becomes an **inextricable** part of your personality. ***You become your grumbling.***
- **Hell is where the sins you wouldn't repent of on earth consumes you, burning** like a never-ceasing fire in your heart.
 - You become your **jealousy** or your **insecurity**. **Selfishness** or **materialism**. Or **racism**. Or **hate**. **Pride**. **Bitterness**. **Dishonesty**. **Suspicion** and **lack of trust**. **Fear**.

Only Jesus can remove the curse of sin from your heart, when you turn to him in repentance and faith and cry out for healing.

Death represents a line where you become fixed in the decisions you made on earth, and the sins you wouldn't repent of consume you: **Revelation 22:11, "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."**

This is **why, by the way, God can't let sinners in heaven**. If God **let us into heaven with sin**, we'd unleash the destructive powers of hell there, too. Heaven would **soon be filled with rape, pride, violence, dishonesty, treachery, and cruelty**.⁸

That's where sinners go, the Bible says. **That's the end of sin**.

⁶ Proverbs 30:16, "...fire never says 'enough!'"

⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 77–78.

3. Hell, not heaven, is our default destination⁹

- Most assume they'll go to heaven, as long as they don't mess it up.
- **Scripture presents the opposite.** God didn't create hell for us; he created us for heaven, but the rebellion of the human race, in which we are all participating, has destined us for hell.

Notice the breadth of who is described as going to hell. ***(8) But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.**" You've got the ones you'd expect, murderers, sorcerers, etc, but it includes a lot of people who could be found in the church!

- **Cowardly:** those who would never stand for Jesus in front of their friends.
- **Faithless:** those who went along in the church but never really trusted God enough to obey—in relationships, their money.
- **Idolaters:** those who wouldn't put God first in their lives. Sat through church, but wouldn't put God first.
- **Liars:** Those who came to church but whose submission to God was not sincere! The relationship with God they portrayed in here was not genuine.

There is not a one of us who hasn't been found in this list at some point, which means that every one of us, by default, is headed for hell.

But it doesn't have to be that way for you! Look at how John ends the book.

⁸ Joshua Ryan Butler's, *The Skeletons in God's Closet*

⁹ Pastor Craig Groeschel

(Conclusion/Music)

Revelation 22:17, The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

John ends the book saying, “**But you don’t have to do that!** The **price has been paid! Jesus paid it all, but you have to receive it.**

Revelation ends with the voice of the Spirit saying, “Come! You don’t have to go to hell. Jesus died so you could be with him, and enjoy heaven forever.” ***But you have to receive it, sincerely.*** It’s an invitation you have to have to respond to personally.

Have you chosen to receive Jesus? Surrendering to him in repentance and faith?

Prayer

- Salvation: not just a prayer, but a cry of your heart. A change of heart toward Jesus that leads to a love for him, his word and his people.

