

## Heaven and Hell Contrasted

At the end of Joshua's life, he gave a speech/sermon in which he clearly set before the Israelites two divergent and diametrically opposed paths. He said the choice was theirs. They could choose to serve "*the gods which your forefathers served beyond the River*" and/or "*the gods of the Amorites in whose lands you are living*" (this would obviously be a poor choice since those *Amorite gods* failed to prevent the land being taken by the Israelites to whom he is speaking!), or they could "*serve the Lord*" with Joshua and his house, Josh.24:14-15.

It really is just that simple. Life is full of choices, but they all typically boil down to this: *whom will you serve?* Rom.6:16-18 makes a similar comparison of choices. But if the choice of *whom we will serve* is too complicated or difficult, God helps us by clarifying the *choice* based on *rewards*. Specifically, the *rewards* of each choice- *heaven* for choosing God, or *hell* for choosing *Satan, self and sin, or anything and everything else*, have clearly contrasted benefits. Let's spend a few minutes considering these *choices*.

- **Heaven is depicted as *eternal life*.**

The NT speaks of "*eternal life*" 41 times (NASB). *Eternal life* is a hard concept for us to grasp- especially in a world and *physical* life wherein everything seems to be bound by time. The idea of *life* lasting *forever* is difficult, but beautiful. Deterioration, degradation, and death are such a part of our existence here that it is difficult to comprehend an existence that does not end. But such is exactly what Jesus promises, John 3:15,16,36.

- **Hell is shown as *eternal destruction and death*.**

Our *physical* bodies are temporal, and can only die once, Heb.9:27. But our *spirits* or *souls* are eternal, and therefore last forever. It is this part of us that can be continuously *destroyed* in a place of *eternal death*, 2Thess.1:9. It is also called "*the second death*," Rev.20:10,14-15; 21:8. Heaven has no *death* or *dying*; hell is *eternal death* and *dying*. The choices are clear.

- **Heaven has *no tears*.**

There are "no tears in heaven" for there will be nothing to cause them, Rev.21:4. There is no *pain*, cause for *mourning*, or *death*! Indeed, "There'll be no sadness, all will be gladness, when we shall join that happy land."

- **Hell has *nothing but tears*.**

Six times in Matthew's account Jesus hell is depicted as a place where there will be "*weeping and gnashing of teeth*," Matt.8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51 and 25:30. The phrase *gnashing of teeth* refers to "denote extreme anguish and utter despair of men consigned to eternal punishment in hell; snarling, growling: in the sense of biting" (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon for *brugmos*).

- **Heaven has *no night*.**

Rev.21:25 tells us that "*there shall be no night there*," but v.23 and 22:5 explain why this is so. The continual presence of *the glory of God* will be the eternal light that will *illumine them*!

- **Hell has *no light*.**

The other choice is a place of *perpetual darkness*, Matt.8:12; 22:13; 25:30. The phrase *outer darkness* is used to describe "the blackness of darkness" (H. Leo Boles Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew; p.191), cf. 2Pet.2:17 and Jude 13. Obviously, it is as far removed as possible from the *light* of the *glory of God*.

- **Heaven has the *water of life*.**

Rev.21:6 says that *the spring of the water of life* will be *without cost* for all.

- **Hell has only *the lake of fire*.**

Rev.20:10-15. Even in the *hadean* realm (the *torment* portion where departed souls of the evil await final judgment and eternal punishment), the *rich man* could not find even a *drop of water* to *cool his tongue* in the *agony* of the flames, Luke 16:24.

- **But there is one common characteristic shared by both *heaven* and *hell*- neither place has any *hope*.**

Heaven has no need of *hope*, Rom.8:20-24. All of the promises in which we *hope* will have been fulfilled.

Hell has no *hope* remaining, 1Thess.4:13. Perhaps the greatest agony of hell will be the realization of there being *no hope* for all eternity.

### **Conclusion / Take Home Points**

- The choices are clear. The rewards or outcome of each of these choices are also clearly given to us by God. Choose this day whom you will serve knowing the contrasting results of your choice.