

**Living the Essentials of the Faith: Everywhere, Everyone, At All Times**  
**RAISE – Revelation, Anthropology, Incarnation, Sanctification, Eternity**  
*Eternity Part 2 – What are you doing for eternity?*

**Key Concept:** Every person experiences an eternal destiny that parallels their earthly life and choices; for some, that destiny is an ever increasing union with God (Heaven), and for others, an ever increasing separation from God (Hell).

**Summary:** The Old Testament universally affirms that God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. However, in the Old Testament, God’s justice predominately occurs in the context of our earthly lives, though glimpses of an eternal vision and future appear in the prophets. In New Testament times, that understanding shifts. Jesus and His disciples maintain their affirmation of divine justice, but they describe the ultimate justice of God as a post-resurrection event. Heaven and Hell, Jesus teaches, are eternal realities.

Jesus mentions the concept of Hell, a place of eternal punishment for the wicked, more often than any other biblical figure. From Jesus’ teaching and the other New Testament authors, we understand that those who choose not to conform to Christ are cast outside the kingdom of heaven, into the “outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Admonishment about the threat of Hell is a regular aspect of Jesus’ ministry.

The church has often asserted that Scripture’s language for Hell (outer darkness, unquenchable fire, etc) is a metaphorical attempt to describe an indescribable reality. Hell is an actual location for those in the condition of eternal separation from God. This separation is the inevitable result of an individual’s choice to live without Christ, and God’s choice to respect that decision. Hell is the fulfillment of our own God-less desires, and therefore, not only are those in Hell without hope, but they are also without objection; they have chosen and continually choose perfect isolation.

Conversely, Heaven is the subjection of our wills to that of God’s. Heaven is not simply a place of happiness for good people, but a place of joy that comes through conformity with Jesus Christ. We enter Heaven through a relationship with Christ precisely because that is what Heaven is – a growing and ever more intimate relationship with Jesus.

Heaven is described as a place where we enjoy the constant presence of the Triune God, and where suffering, sin and death are no more. Jesus often speaks of the promise of eternal life, a promise secured by His death and resurrection. This everlasting life is lived in community with all the saints of every time and place.

The church teaches that Heaven is an ever increasing union with an infinite and perfect God. Together with all the saints, we eternally grow closer to the source of all joy. While Scripture’s language for Heaven is also symbolic, we can expect more than harps and clouds; instead, Heaven promises wild and unbridled wonders, glorious challenges and victories, and the certain knowledge that each day will hold greater joy than the one it preceded as we grow in relationship with our Savior, Jesus.