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**5 sessions on
Heaven and Hell**

by Trevor Pearce



Headings

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Heaven and Hell

Introduction

The aim of this term is to introduce the young people to the Bible's teaching on heaven and hell. The book that has influenced me most is **C.S. Lewis** book *The Great Divorce*. I have ordered some for you as a team to read and will get them to you as soon as possible. At first glance it would seem that the Bible has more to say on hell than it does on heaven, but what **C.S. Lewis** does is to open up your mind to the fundamental truths of heaven and hell, and once that is done you begin to see it everywhere in the Bible.

1. God Rules Heaven

- As Christians often the reason we arrive at the wrong answers, is because we ask the wrong questions. When considering what heaven is like, the very first question to ask is who is at its centre, it's heart, who is it that's in sovereign charge? The answer to that question is obviously *God*, but how quick we seem to miss that, or move on to questions concerning the furniture of new heavens and the new earth instead of asking questions about the one who sustains the present creation, and who will recreate and sustain the new one. If we want to find out what heaven is like then we have to start with *God* and his character and purpose for his universe. So if *God* is the sovereign ruler of heaven, then what is at the heart of his rule?

2. God's Rule = Relationship

- At the very heart of *God's* nature is the fact that He is three persons *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Spirit*, yet one *God*, therefore at the very heart of *God* is relationship. In **1 John 4:16**, we read the beautiful words "**God is love**". Now if *God* is love, then there has to be a trinity, for a being that has love at its very core, has to therefore have someone to love, which is obviously fulfilled within the relationship of the trinity. So *God* rules heaven and at the very heart of that rule is the relationship of *Father*, *Son* and *Holy*

Spirit. So from asking who is in sovereign control, we have come up with some stunning answers.

- **God is the sovereign ruler of heaven - Heb 1:16, 12:2, Rev 5:13.**
- **God is three persons, therefore he is a trinity - Matt 28:19.**
- **At the heart of the trinity's relationship is love - 1 Jn 4:16.**

3. What Rules Our Relationships?

- So if God's relationship is dominated by pure love, then the next and obvious question to ask is what is it that rules our relationships? What is our common experience in the good ones and the bad? It would seem to me that at the heart of all human relationships is the strong desire to love and to be loved. Now because of the fall and our sinful human natures, the pure love that the trinity experience is a far cry from anything that we know, instead our relationships are marked by loving others so that we in return will be loved back. This does not mean that we don't experience real love, but at its heart is a selfish motive. Therefore what this leads to is each one of us seeking to make ourselves loveable. Lurking beneath the surface of each of us is the fear of being unloved, rejected, and lonely; therefore these fears drive us all the harder to make ourselves loveable so that we don't experience what we greatly fear.

4. Tasting heaven or tasting hell.

- The great Christian hope is given to us in, **1 John 3:2, when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** Now ponder that. On the day of judgement God will change our natures so that we love as he loves. No longer will we love so as to be loved back, but instead like the trinity's relationship we will love for the beauty of loving, and the beauty of the loved one. Now of course as Christians, the command of our Master is that this love should become evident now **John 13:34-35**. It is amongst God's people that the world should taste a little bit of heaven as they watch and hopefully experience us loving each other in a trinity like way. Therefore as soon as you are converted in one sense heaven begins. As you enter the family of God, what you enter is a

community of people who are being changed into the likeness of Christ, they are a new creation **2 Cor 5:17**, **Gal 6:13**. Each individual's character is being made into the likeness of Christ, but also together as God's people we are being changed **1 Peter 2:5** to reflect God's character.

- The other side of the coin is of course true. Every time in this life a person experiences a broken relationship, which leads to pain, hurt and loneliness they experience a taste of hell. It is of course only a taste, but it is enough of a taste to be a severe warning of the hell to come.

"But what, you ask of earth? Earth, I think, will not be found by anyone to be in the end a very distinct place. I think earth, if chosen instead of heaven, will turn out to have been, all along, only a region of Hell, and earth, if put second to heaven, to have been from the beginning a part of Heaven itself.

C.S.Lewis The Great Divorce

- So you see, heaven and hell is everywhere in the Bible, because it's all centred upon God, and therefore all centred upon relationships. So with the young people my aim is for each talk to be utterly God and relationship centred, which should lead us to a true picture of the new heavens, earth, and hell.

Discussion Group Questions

1. Before you came tonight, what did you think heaven and hell was going to be like?
2. How is it possible to experience a little bit of hell while living on earth?
3. How is it possible to experience a little bit of heaven on while living on earth?
4. Has tonight's talk changed or altered the way you think about heaven or hell?
5. Is the Bible's view of heaven attractive to you and why?

Touching Heaven or Touching Hell

Mark 4:35-41

Teaching Aims

- To show that in heaven we will have physical bodies the same as Jesus' resurrection body.
- Therefore if in the new heavens we will have a physical body, heaven itself will therefore be physical.
- When we look at Mark 4:35-41, we get massive clues as to what the physical new heavens will look like. From that story we can see that all the evils of the physical creation will be done away with through the all powerful rule of Jesus.
- We know for sure that he will be able to do this in the future, because he did it in the past.

Introduction

- Last week we came to some pretty big conclusions and hopefully laid down the foundation to build our series upon. We established that if we are going to understand what the new heavens and hell are like, then we have to begin by asking questions not about heaven and hell, but about the nature and character of God. What we saw was that God is a trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that at the centre of their relationship is love. Therefore if we are going to understand the nature of the new heavens and hell, then we have to see them in the light of how God relates as trinity, and then how we relate as human beings.
- In the four stories covered in Mark 4:35-5:43, we have acted out what God's plan for the new creation is. Ever since mankind chose to rebel against their creator; they have been under God's curse, which primarily works its way out in four crucial areas.
- Because of mankind's rebellion creation is cursed, **Gen 3:17-19**.
- Because of mankind's rebellion human relationships are cursed, **Gen 3:16**.

- Because of mankind's rebellion death and illness enter God's world, **Gen 2:17**.

What we see in these stories is a display of how Jesus as the Son of the Most High, has absolute authority over these curses. What we see in these stories is how they point forward to the day when Jesus will renew creation **Rom 8:18-22**, **Rev 21:1**, destroy evil so that all relationships are restored **Gen 3:15**, **Ro 16:20**, and abolish illness, death and tears **Rev 21:3-4**. What I would like us to do in the next three weeks is to look at these stories and to witness how brilliantly they point us forward to heaven.

1. A Physical Body

- What I want us to look at today, is the truth that Jesus' resurrection body was a physical one. The gospels declare this truth in the recounting of history, and the apostles preach this fact when they explain and defend the gospel.
 - a. They saw him physically - **Mt 28:7,17**, **Lk 24:15,31,36**, **Jn 20:16,21:7**, **Acts 2:22-24,29-33**, **1 Cor 15:3-8**.
 - b. He could be physically touched - **Mt 28:9**, **Lk 24:36-40**, **Jn 20:17,20-23,26-28**.
 - c. They spoke and listened to him - **Mt 28:10,16-20**, **Lk 24:17,36, 45-51**, **Jn 20:16,21:11-14,15-24**.
 - d. He physically ate - **Lk 24:41-43**, **Jn 21:11-13**.
 - e. He is physical yet different - **Lk 24:16,31, 36**.
- What is crystal clear from these verses is that Jesus' resurrected body was a physical one, for he ate, was seen, touched, and heard. Therefore when we look at his physical resurrection body, what we are looking at is what one day we will be **1 Jn 3:2**. Like Jesus we will have a resurrected physical body. So often our thoughts of the new heaven and the new earth are mystical a little hairy fairy. But the Bible's view people with resurrected physical bodies.

2. Physical body = physical creation

- The logical conclusion to the truth that we will inherit a physical resurrected body is that we will also inherit a physical new heaven to live in. What is clear in the Bible is that the present heaven and earth will be destroyed **Isaiah 65:17, 2 Pet 3:7-13**, paving way for the new one, which will be perfect. The obvious questions which flows from these Biblical truth is what will the new physical earth be like? And does the Bible give us any hints?

3. The Perfect Storm - Mark 4:35-41

- If we are to understand the nature of the new heavens and the new earth, the person to look to is of course Jesus. In him we learn how to love like God in our relationships, for he uniquely loved without ever being controlled by others responses **Lk 23:34**, and loved others without the need or desire to be loved back in return. The same applies when it comes to the physical nature of the new heavens as we will see in **Mark 4:34-41**.

Fear Rules

- When we read this story one of the main themes is fear as the disciples fear three things. They are fearful of the storm and fearful that their very lives are about to come to a sudden end **4:35-38**. At this point in time the physical creation is their greatest enemy, as the sea threatens to drown all life out of them. Their fear leads to them waking up the Lord of all creation, who when woken effortlessly calls the wind, waves and sea to attention with just three small words **4:39**. From fearing creation, they now fear the creator as gobbed smacked they blurt out the question 'Who is this'. The answer to that question is obvious, an answer that even hell has to admit to, that perched in a boat on the lake of Galilee is the Son of the Most High God **Mk 5:6-7**.

Fear Forgotten

- So how does this story point to the new heavens and the new earth? What we see here is Jesus complete mastery over his creation, controlling it in such a way that drives out fear and brings complete calm. Therefore what this miracle first points to is one of

the great marks of the fall. When Adam and Eve rebelled against their loving maker, instantly the perfect and beautiful creation became a real and potential enemy of mankind **Gen 3:17-19**. That's what we see here in this story; creation is at this point the disciple's greatest fear and enemy. The same can be said of every human being that has ever lived, that creation can be a great friend, but at the very same time the bringer of death and destruction. When we look at creation as Christians we must view it as something that is frustrated in its present state, waiting in anticipation for the day when God will release it from its present form, to be renewed into what it should be **Roms 8:19-22**. In this marvellous story we have a window into the last day, the day when creation will be liberated and renewed, by the Son of God. A creation that is physical and holds absolutely no fear what so ever for those who it has been prepared for.

Fear Forever

- As with all truths about heaven, turn them upside down and what you arrive with is the reality of hell. If heaven's going to be the place of perfect relationships because we reflect the trinity, then hell will be the place of eternal broken relationships and all the hate and heart ache that go with them. If heaven is to be creation recreated because the creator releases it from its bondage and frustration **Roms 8:18-22**, then hell will be creation forever in bondage and frustration. People will live forever with the fear and realisation of a thousand earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and droughts all rolled into one. To reject and rebel against the creator, is to invite the full force of his creation against you.

The Guarantee

- What is the guarantee people might say? The guarantee that Jesus will recreate a physical new earth is this very story. We know for sure that Jesus has the power to recreate the world, because while he was on earth he displayed complete power over it. We know that he will do it in the future, because he did it in the past. Therefore as Christians we have a wonderful new physical body to look forward to, and a marvellous new physical world to enjoy it in, where fear is banished because King Jesus rules. The new heavens will be a place where King Jesus will change our characters so that we love like God, and change the world so that like Adam and Eve

we can enjoy God's world in his loving presence where all fear and questions are eternally answered **Mark 4:43**.

Discussion Group Questions

1. What evidence does the Bible give to prove that when Jesus rose from the dead his body was a physical one?
2. If you are a Christian what will your body be like in the new earth?
3. What won't be in the new earth?
4. Why won't those things be there, and how can we be sure?
5. In what way does God's new earth excite you?

Recycled or the Rubbish Bin

Key Teaching Aim

- To show that Jesus has supreme control over satan and evil.
- To show that this story is a picture of what will happen on the day of judgement.
 - a. Satan will be defeated
 - b. The affects of sin in those who trust Christ will be removed and replaced by the likeness of Christ.
 - c. Those who like the demons refuse to accept the Lordship of Jesus will be judged.

Introduction

- The aim of the previous two sets of notes has been to put God and his character at the very centre of all our understanding of the new creation, and the nature of hell. We have observed that eternity is all about relationships, as we will either reflect the perfect relationship enjoyed within the trinity, or choose to experience relationships outside of the influence of God's love. Last week we began to see that these stories in Mark give us a brilliant window into the nature of the new creation and hell. We touched heaven and hell in the last story, and this week we will see exactly how Jesus is going to recycle our sinful hearts and judge God's enemies.

1. No control 5:1-5

- Of all stories in the gospels none get closer in revealing to us the devastating consequences of satan's control over individuals than this one. In the life of this man we see visibly the destructive forces of satan at work, as he is controlled totally by the demons living inside of him **5:1**. Their aim is to carry out the mission of their master, which is to destroy completely the image of God in man **Jn 10:10**. We see this most clearly in the way that he completely lacks any kind of self control **5:3-5**, with the result being isolation from all those around him, as his relationships lye in total tatters. Satan's work looks to all intense and purposes to have been completed, as Legion roams the hills, lonely, angry and full of bitterness.

- At first glance this story looks so extreme that any kind of application to us today seems very remote. Yet if we take a deeper look, what we see is that Legion far from being remote is actually a mirror image of every human. When we look into the Bible demon possession though real is not that common, but satan's ownership of each human being is taught clearly and boldly throughout the New Testament, **Mt 12:22-37, 2 Cor 4:4, Eph 2:1-4, Col 1:13-14, 21, 2:13-15, 1 Jn 5:19**. Therefore our hearts and natures reflect the father that we belong to **Mk 7:20-23, Roms 8:7, Col 1:21**.
- What Legion is marked by is a total lack of self control, which is reflected in the life of every human being. If we were to ask the question, do we have control over our sinful lives, the answer is always, yes and no. If we were to ask the question, can we stop ourselves from telling lies, and acting selfishly, the answer would be yes. If we were to ask the question can we stop ourselves from being liars and living selfishly the answer would be no. Just like Legion, our sinful nature, and selfish hearts rule and affect our whole lives, and every relationship that we are in. We can control our tongue and natures from occasional acts, but we have no hope in controlling the consistent bias of our selfish lives. As with Legion so with us, the thing that suffers most from satan's attack upon the image of God is first our relationship to our maker, and then secondly our relationships with each other. When Adam and Eve rebelled, they instantly entered a whole new world, where God was now their enemy, and human relationships had the potential to bring pain, suffering alienation and loneliness. Today we don't have to work that hard to be able to see how this is working its way out in the lives of the young people that we serve, as many of them will have tasted the devastating affects of divorce, and relationship break down.

2. No contest Mark 5:6-13

- What we view in the next few verses is a wonderful insight into Jesus attitude towards satan and his vandalism upon God's masterpiece man. But not only is it a picture of Jesus attitude, but also a stunning example of his complete power and mastery over the forces of evil. When we read the words and examine the actions of the demons who control this pitiful man, a picture is painted of a triumphant Jesus and a defeated devil.
- a. The demons first response when they see Jesus is to instantly fall on their knees **5:6**. This is in no way an act of worship, but instead a clear acknowledgement of Jesus awesome person and power. They despise Jesus and hate bowing the knee, but when they come face to face with the King of Kings, it's what they must do.
- b. Their second response is to answer the question that the disciples asked in the previous story **4:41**. On their knees they have to acknowledge two crucial things, firstly Jesus person 'Son of the Most High God', and secondly his mission, which is to destroy the work of the evil one **Rev 20:10**.

This story therefore propels us into the reality of the Day of Judgment. On that day the forces of evil will have no other option than to bow the knee, **Roms 14:11**, **Phil 2:9-10**. On that day the forces of evil will have no other option than to acknowledge who Jesus is, **Phil 2:11**. On that day the forces of evil will meet their definite end, which is torture and judgement **2 Thess 1:5-10**. As with the story last week, we know for sure that these events will take place, because of the picture of Jesus awesome power over evil revealed here.

- c. Their third response is how they respond to the imminent judgment, which is about to be inflicted. What this reveals is that Jesus complete power over satan is not something which is only to be experienced in the future, but something which is experienced ever minute of every day now. As in the story of Job, satan cannot move a muscle, even in judgement without the permission of the awe-inspiring Jesus, just look at the words used to describe their predicament **5:10**, "And he begged Jesus again and again". **5:12**, The demons begged Jesus, **5:13**, He gave them permission.

What a picture this is, for here are Satan's workers asking Jesus permission when to be judged.

In the minds of most young people when you speak of a spiritual battle between satan and God they will always think of dualism, of two opposing forces with equal power and hopefully the good force winning through. But that is not the Bible's view of things, no we see a Jesus who is all powerful, and a devil who is grovelling on the floor, begging Jesus concerning the judgement he is about to face. Here we have reality. It's so easy to think in our world that satan is King and God is powerless, but this story pulls back the curtain to reality, where Jesus is wielding his devastating power.

3. No Fear 5:15-20

- The picture that we are left with of the demon possessed man can be described as nothing but beautiful **5:15**. The power of God has released a prisoner of satan from torment and misery. The condition of the man at the beginning of the story is now been 100% reversed. From nakedness he is now dressed, from having a mind filled with evil, it is now calm and passionate about following the saviour **5:15,18**. The demons that lived inside the man begged to not be judged **5:10,12**, but here the turn around is complete as he now begs to follow Jesus **5:18**. What this displays to us in bright colours is the difference the Lordship of Jesus makes in the life of a believer. What this reveals to us is that the instant that Jesus releases a sinner from the bondage of satan the new creation begins in making them like the one who has saved them, **2 Cor 5:17-18**, **1 Jn 3:2-3**. The mission of Jesus is to gather a people of his very own and to make them like him, and this story reveals that truth. Now to do that Jesus on the last day of history is going to destroy all evil, all sin, all selfishness, and this story is a picture and a guarantee of that fact. It's a picture because we see the work of God in this man, it a guarantee because we witness Jesus total and supreme power over satan and evil.

4. No doubt 5:14-18

- Often lurking in many people minds and hearts is the thought that on the day of Judgement, it won't really be as bad for unbelievers as the Bible makes out? This story though kicks completely into touch that hidden feeling. We have already seen how Jesus is going to judge satan, but what we also get is a window into how Jesus will judge humans who have refused to bow the knee to his powerful Lordship.
- The story finishes, not with hoards of people following Jesus, thanking him for changing Legion, but instead the complete opposite. What we read is that people have seen with their very eyes the power of God in changing a demon possessed man, but instead of begging to follow Jesus like Legion, they plead with Him to depart from them **5:17**. So how does this give us a window into understanding exactly how Jesus is going to treat someone who in life has rejected him? The answer is seen clearly in how Jesus responds to the people desire **5:18**. The response of Jesus is absolutely devastating, for what he does is to give the people exactly what they desire, and that is life without him. The day of Judgement will be exactly the same as this scene, Jesus giving people what they have chosen, what they desire, what they want, life without God. The Day of Judgement will be a time where Jesus simply cements people's decisions, and gives them hell, life without his love and affection **Mt 7:23-28, 25:41**.
- As we teach the young people about Hell lets not be in any shadow of a doubt that if in this life they refuse to bow they knee to Jesus, then in the next life they will, reflecting exactly the same circumstance as the demons in this story, the judgement of Jesus which will lead like it did for the demons to torture.

Discussion Group Questions

1. What area of your life does sin rule you?
2. Is there any way that you can control it?
3. How does the truth of Jesus being the judge make you feel?
4. Why was Legion better off after he met Jesus than before?
5. Why should the story of Legion make you want to follow Jesus?

No Tears Tomorrow

Mark 5:21-43

Teaching Aim

1. To show that death and illness are both the enemies of God and man.
2. They are the enemies of God because they are the complete opposite to his very nature, for he is life, Jn 5:26 14:6.
3. They are the enemies of man, for they stem from the curses and judgement given by God in the Garden of Eden Gen 3:13-19.
4. What we see in this story is Jesus reversing completely the curses of the fall, as he conquers illness and defeats death.
5. This awesome power of Jesus points forward to the new creation, the place where all death, illness and tears will be a thing of yesterday, and never tomorrow Rev 7:13-17, 21:1-7. But for those who reject Jesus, illness, death, and tears will be their only and eternal experience Rev 21:8.

Introduction

In our studies on heaven so far, the picture of the new creation that has been painted to us by God's word is massively exciting. We have seen that heaven is place which in every way reflects God's beautiful and marvellous character. It's a place of perfect relationships, because our natures will be changed in an instant to reflect the relationship enjoyed within the trinity. It's a place where the physical creation will be recreated as proved by Jesus while he was upon earth **Mark 4:35-41**. And lastly, as we saw last week, for all those who like Legion experience God's salvation; they will live in an environment without a hint of outside evil, or inside selfishness.

On the other hand, hell is the complete opposite to heaven. It's a place of eternally broken relationships, full of angry and bitter people. They will live in an environment ruled by fear, where creation will be their constant enemy, and mankind's selfishness and evil, their repeated

experience. As we come to our study today, what we will see again is the awesome power and might of Jesus, disarming the enemies of God and man, and replacing them with life and hope.

1. Do you ever think about illness or death?

Why or why not?

- Young people are characterised by living for the now, and fulfilling a Nike approach to life, that if it feels good 'just do it'. The thought of a terminal illness or death is often the very last thing on a young persons mind, as they live as if those fears or experiences are a million miles away. Yet we may be shocked that for some young people illness and death, far from being distant, is actually part and parcel of their very lives. A young person may have experienced the death of a loved one, or lived through a parent or relative dying of a terminal illness. Therefore when we ask this question we must not presume that in the minds of all young people death is a distant reality, because for some it may well have been a real or even a present experience.
- If a young person has or is experiencing the pain of a persons death or illness, let them share what's its like, if they are prepared to do so. This may help them, and also sober up the rest of the group who think of illness and death as distant realities.

2. Why is illness and death such a massive enemy to each of us? Look up Mark 5:22-23, 26, 38.

- What we must seek to bring out here is the utter urgency of Jairus to have his daughter saved from death, and then secondly the complete despair experienced when his daughter dies. Depending on the young people's answer to the first question will necessitate how hard or easy it is to bring this crucial point out.
- To hammer this truth home it may well be worth asking leading questions such as -
 - " If your mum and dad were in a similar situation to Jairus, or the lady how would they respond to Jesus if they thought he could heal you?

"If you died how would your mum and dad, friends and relatives respond?"

"How ever good a doctor may be, what is the one big reality that we all face - and can we do anything about it?"

3. Why does God hate illness and death?

- When we read **Genesis 1&2**, the picture that is painted is one of overflowing life, emanating from the source of all life God. Before mankind's rebellion in the Garden of Eden, illness and death are nowhere to be seen, because God is perfectly loved and obeyed. Yet when mankind seeks freedom from God, at that point illness and death become the curses that God sends as a judgment upon their sin **Gen 3:13-19**.
- Yet although they are God's rightful and just punishment, that does not mean that God delights in the way that they devastate and destroy his creation, and mankind's lives. This comes out very powerfully when Jesus meets Martha and Mary at the grave side of Lazarus in **John 11**. The words that are used to describe Jesus response to the intense grief of Martha and Mary is striking **John 11:33**, and no doubt felt by Jesus in **Mark 5**, where again he comes face to face with death and its devastating consequences. The English translations of **Jn 11:33** are on the whole far too gentle as they only give the impression of grief, but the emotion of Jesus here is better described as anger than grief. In his commentary on John, D. Carson translates **Jn 11:11** as "**he was outraged in spirit, and troubled**". The emotion of Jesus when faced with Lazarus' death is the word in Greek to describe a horse snorting at something that it dislikes. What we have in **Jn 11**, and here in **Mark 5**, is the prince of life coming face to face with death and its devastating effects upon his creation, and though it's his just judgment, at the same time it creates an emotion of Jesus intense anger and outrage.
- This view of Jesus is essential to convey to the young people. The God we worship and follow is not like Buddha serene and distant, but instead full of anger at the things which devastate his creation especially mankind.

4. What guarantee is there that illness and death won't be in the new creation?

Look up Mk 5:28-29,41-42.

- The answer to this question is exactly the same one that was given last week. We know that Jesus has the power to perfectly renew creation **Mk 4:35-41**, getting rid of all sin **Mk 5:1-20**, illness and death **Mk 5:21-43**, because while he was on earth he displayed complete and utter power over them. He will do it in the future, because he did it in the past.

5. How does this view of the new creation make you feel?

- The final book of the Bible paints some brilliant pictures of the new creation. It's a place where all the evils of this world are destroyed, therefore all the suffering that goes with them are also done away with, **Rev 7:13-17, 21:1-7**. The new creation is a place where all tears and grief are banned, for fear is gone and sin and its affects conquered by the triumphant Jesus. Let's rejoice in our hope as Christians and let the young people feel the full force of that.

6. If hell is the opposite of the new creation, what do you think is in store for those who reject Jesus?

- Having painted the positive picture of the new creation, we must not in any way play down the reality of hell. If the new creation is a perfect physical world then hell is a creation filled with disasters and constant desolation. If the new creation is where human selfishness and sin are absent then hell is a place where human selfishness and all of it's destructive consequences are everyday experiences. If the new creation is a place where illness and death are not present, then hell is a place where illness and death is experienced and felt by all, for all of the time. A place where no one ever wipes your tears, a place where God is only present to judge and punish **Rev 6:14-17, 19:15, 21:8**.

Jesus the Hell Raiser

Teaching Aim

- To show that Jesus took the wrath of God and our hell on the cross, so that we could enjoy the new creation.

Sermon Outline

To show that the new creation =

- a. Perfect nature loving people like God loves.
- b. Perfect physical environment - i.e. new creation.
- c. Perfect physical body, for illness and death are defeated.

To show that hell is these four things turned upside down.

- a. Ruined relationship ruled only by fear.
- b. Ruined creation ruled only by disaster.
- c. Ruined body ruled only by death.

To show that Jesus experienced all of these at the cross

- a. Ruined relationships - Leaders - Nation - Disciples - Father.
- b. Creation - In turmoil - earth quake.
 - Let there be light - now darkness
 - Genesis 3 times blessed - now three times cursed.
 - Animals ruling man - Ps 22
- c. Illness and death experienced by the source of all life.
 - He is naked - so that we are clothed
 - He is thirsty so that we can drink.
 - He is dies so that we can have life.

Adult Sermon

Jesus the Hell Raiser

1. The Nature of HELL

If the new creation is perfect relationships, enjoyed in a perfect environment, with the guarantee that illness and death will never rob you of your enjoyment of them, then what do you think hell is going to be?

The obvious conclusion is that hell, is the opposite of those things.

Relationships which are ruined without any hope of repair.

A physical world where beauty and awe are never experienced, but instead fear and destruction rule every minute of every day.

A place where your physical body always feels the most devastating pain, and where the sorrow of death is the air you breathe.

The worst part of hell of course is the first point - that hell is a life full of broken and shattered relationships. A kind of eternal Albert Square.

When I was teaching this to the JF, one of the young people said, the feelings you have when your parents get divorced - but eternally, and he was getting very close to exactly what hell is all about.

Your see if God is love - and we are his creation, then any love that we experience, whether that be given or received ultimately stems from God, whether we are Christians or non Christians.

It's the same as life - every single human being's life is a gift from God, whether we are Christians or not, all life originates from him.

So with love, every once of love that we either give or receive is a gift from God and originates from **his** character, whether we are Christians or not.

As Christians we live in an un real world if we think that non Christians don't experience loving, therefore enjoyable relationships.

I stand here as a person, who has been wonderfully loved and greatly cared for by many non Christians, whether that be by family or friends.

But if a person chooses not to believe and follow the one true God of the Bible, then what they have chosen to do is to massively distance themselves from the source of all love, the person who makes it possible for the to love in the first place.

Now the cord is not completely severed, because within their own natures they still reflect God likeness, so therefore have a passion to love and be loved.

But the standard by which a non Christian loves is only ever the one that they create - which leaves massive potential for relationships going pear shaped.

To try and love someone outside God's guidance, the source of love, is not only complete arrogance, but also is a recipe for disaster.

Now think about the weaknesses in your character and personality, the selfish habits that regularly rear their ugly heads in the relationships that you have.

The Bible would say that they stem from your sinful nature, and then are nicely nurtured by the rebellious world that we live in.

So the relationships that have influenced you have made you the person you are - for good or for bad.

So you may well have a tendency to manipulate others in the way you relate, maybe through giving people the **silent treatment**, or blowing your top with the **load treatment**.

If you are a Christian, then the Holy Spirit begins to wage war upon those entrenched selfish habits.

He is 100% committed to making you like the Lord Jesus, therefore the new creation has begun.

But for the non Christian, who has chosen the path which leads away from God, away from the source of love, your life has the potential to taste hell now, and is right at this very moment tottering on the edge of tasting it forever.

Every time a relationship goes sour and sore in this life, because someone has tried to live life outside the love and guidance of God - they have or give someone else a taste of hell.

Every time someone feels rejected, unloved, hated or lonely, they have a taste of hell.

You see the best way to describe hell, which is one of the key themes of **C.S. Lewis's** book *The Great Divorce* - is that hell is life without God - its what people while on earth have been wanting all their lives.

They want to live their lives their way, running their relationships outside the love of God, so on judgement day God cements their decision, he gives them exactly - 100% all they have ever desired and wanted - life without their creator, life without the source of all love.

So what do they then inherit? Loveless relationships, devoid completely of any influence from God - any godlikeness whatsoever taken away, forever.

Behind every eye they look into, will only ever be concentrated evil - total selfishness, complete hatred - for there is not one ounce of God's love left - only human selfishness and rebellion.

Every selfish and destructive habit that they bore while upon earth - magnified beyond belief and concentrated to such an extent that it controls their every move and desire.

Living in a world full of hate, where everyone fervently fights for their rights, their corner, in their world.

A place where rejection and loneliness is the only emotion you will ever experience, no friendly smile or acts of kindness, for any trace of God's love, is gone forever.

So when someone says that they would rather go to hell, because that is where their loved one is - what they have never understood is exactly what hell is going to be like.

Yes their loved one maybe there - but they will be nothing like the person that they remembered while in this life.

Standing before them, will be a person who by their own choice has had all the likeness to God withdrawn.

Standing before them, will be a person who has neither the desire nor ability to love anyone, because they have been cut off completely from the source of all love - **God**.

Add to that, that it will be a world where creation will sing not to the praise of its creator, but instead will dance to the tune of those who live within it.

The people's faces will be screwed up with hatred, and so will creations.

Screwed up with disaster - with no Jesus there to speak words of calm, words that restore creation to its original beauty and goodness.

Now as Christians we believe that when Jesus died upon the cross, he took the punishment that we deserved.

The anger of God upon our sin, was taken by him instead of us, in other words, he took our hell.

Now what I would like us to do today is to investigate what that actually means.

2. Rejected By His Friends

The Bible's view of the cross is that Jesus took our hell; he stood in our place, and took the punishment that should have been coming to us.

Now in what way is that true?

The story of the cross begins with in the garden of Gethsemane a scene where Jesus is with all of his disciples except Judas

All of them lead by Peter have promised to be faithful to him.

Matt 26:34 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times." 35, But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. 36, Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane.

But then the time of testing arrives, as we read in

Matt 26:47, While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48, Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." 49, Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Now as Jesus faces this mob with swords and clubs, among them is a man who Jesus has loved with a perfect love.

But in reply Judas chooses to betray him.

Now as Judas approached Jesus - what was Jesus getting a taste of, what was it that he was experiencing?

As the relationship broke down - as Jesus went through the severe pain of rejection - at that point Jesus was experiencing a taste of hell.

And if we look at **26:56** - the pain intensifies, and the taste of hell gets stronger and bitterer.

Matt 26:56, Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

3. Rejected By Israel Leaders

The story of the cross moves from a garden to a court room, as Jesus was first hounded like a dog in the garden, and now bundled into the lions den of a court room.

Those who have organised and orchestrated the affair are the leaders of Israel, the ones who are in charge of Israel's religious and moral life.

Ever since they set eyes upon Jesus they have felt threatened.

Ever since they encountered his person the seeds of hatred were planted, and have now grown so strong that they passionately desire his death.

Matt 26:59, The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. 60, But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

As Jesus looked into the eyes Israel's leaders what did he encounter?

As Jesus considered their obvious motives what do you think he felt?

When Jesus experienced their actions of hatred - what was happening to him?

Matt 26: 65, Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. 66, He is worthy of death," they answered. 67, Then they spat in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him 68, and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"

At this point the experience of hell grew.

At this point the taste of hell was stronger even than in the garden.

4. Rejected By Israel's People

But the story does not end there, or get any better, as we move from a court ruled by a mob, to the courtroom ruled by the many.

Here is the scene - a conscience stricken Roman governor - who is used to killing people for fun.

But for once his conscience is disturbed, as his wife has had a dream to leave this wandering Galilean preacher alone, and to spare him his life.

He finally comes up with a novel idea to pacify his burning conscience.

He decides to give the people a choice - they can choose to release a notorious criminal called Barabbas, or Jesus.

So what's the response from Israel's people?

Matt 27:21 "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. 22 "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" 23 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

Now please notice the word all for there is no mistake either to the people's choice or that it is all the people that desire it.

24, When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" 25, All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Now as Jesus looks out upon the vast crowd - what does he see?

He sees faces contorted with loathing.

He sees eyes full of hatred.

He hears voices baying for his blood.

And as Jesus has looks at their faces - into their eyes - and listens to their voices what is Jesus experiencing?

A taste of - HELL - as he stands there - hated - rejected - lonely.

But the worst is still to come - for all of these experiences are tastes of hell - the actual reality is still waiting to fall.

5. Rejected By His Father

From the courtrooms we move to the cross - where Jesus is beaten to a pulp by the Romans, and then hammered upon a cross.

He's there wounded, bleeding, dying, enduring all the curses of the fall, when the worst of all things possible happens to him.

Matt 27:46, About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Here is the Son of God - the one who has been in a perfectly loving relationship within the trinity for all eternity.

The relationship where each person of the trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, have always loved each other perfectly.

Suddenly it's broken, suddenly it's severed - leaving Jesus completely and utterly forsaken.

Think with me of human relationships that are special.

Band of Brothers - 22, 289 - Married Couple

The best human relationships that people may experience - but they pail into insignificance compared with this relationship.

The trinity planned for the darling Son to taste hell in experiencing the hatred of men.

The trinity planned for their relationship to be broken so that Jesus would taste the full force of hell, as the world sin was heaped upon him.

The trinity planned for their relationship to be broken so that Jesus would take the anger of God, so that we would go free, forgiven and guaranteed heaven. When we say that Jesus experienced our hell - its this that we are talking about.

Jesus experiencing God's anger - being left completely lonely facing the hatred of man and of God against sin.

So what should our response be to these truths?

a. Non Chrj - Repent - or face an angry God.

b. Tell - Pooh -

Christopher Robin - I have some news

Pooh - Is it bad

Christopher Robin - Yes

Pooh - well it can wait

Christopher Robin - For how long

Pooh - For ever and ever.

Do we have a Whinny the Poo kind of theology when it comes to hell?

Hey Nostradamus - Pg 27.