

- ***READ Revelation 21:1-8*** As John is beginning to conclude the Revelation that was given to him by the Lord Jesus, he speaks of a perfect place where the people of God will be with their Father. Many would see this as John speaking of heaven, while others would say this is referring to the church in its glory. Regardless of which position one might take, the inescapable conclusion is that this place of peace and safety has been made and reserved for those who were faithful to their God in all things.
- On the other hand, we find that those who fail to overcome, those who fail to inherit these blessings will find themselves in a much different place. John says that the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars will have no part in that place for the godly, but instead they will find themselves in the lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death.
- Let's be honest, how could these type of people expect anything else? If you're a murderer, you really can't expect to go to heaven, right? If you're an exceedingly immoral person, you can't expect to live forever in the presence of a holy God, right? Most of the people are probably going to wake up in hell and be like, "Yeah, should've expected this to be the case." However, can I suggest that it is very well possible that there are going to be a great number of people who find themselves in hell and they are going to be surprised, even shocked, to realize this is the case. This evening, I'd like to take a few minutes to look at four different groups of people who I suspect will find themselves very surprised that this world ends and the next begins with them trapped forever in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

I. Atheists

A. The atheist gives no thought to God because he doesn't believe there is a God or an afterlife.

1. Those who would identify themselves as atheists do so because they do not believe in the existence of the supernatural which would prevent them from believing in the God of heaven whom we seek to serve.
2. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that you would be able to spot an atheist out of a crowd. They don't look differently than we look. They are people just as we are, but their lives are not governed by any sort of moral code or standard greater than what they might come up with for themselves or what they submit to through the government. They don't think much about the consequences of their actions beyond what temporary things might happen.
3. Their thoughts or plans for their existence don't go beyond this life because in their estimation once we die...that's it we are dead and we are gone because there is no soul-like component to man. As long as they are able to live a happy life and accomplish that which they would like to accomplish, in their eyes that is a good life. Once it ends that is just it.

B. What a shock it will be for them then once this life ends and they find themselves in torment.

1. When I think of those who are atheists, especially those who are militant in their beliefs, those who would behave hatefully towards others simply because they hold to a measure of faith, I can't help but think about the words of Paul in **Philippians 2:9-11**, *"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*
2. These verses come right on the heels of Paul's words concerning what Jesus was willing to do for all of mankind in order that they might be saved. Through these great sacrificial acts, Paul says that God will in response lay upon Jesus a name that is above all names. It will be a name that will demand that all men bow their knee and every person will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. You want to know who that includes? That even includes those atheists who spent their lives denying the existence of God. Simply put, they are in for a real surprise when this life ends because they will come to realize that there is a God, He is alive, and He will be their judge.

II. The Rich

A. The rich often live lives where they focus on nothing but becoming even more wealthy.

1. These people are able to live lives when they don't truly know what it means to be without. Every need they might possibly have is quickly met because of their overwhelming wealth.
2. However, instead of seeking to do good with what they have been blessed with, and instead of seeking to prepare for things beyond wealth, these people often focus on nothing else besides trying to become even more rich. A good example of such is the rich man from **Luke 12:16-21**. This man was truly blessed, yet instead of seeking to do good or to focus on things more important than wealth, he put all of his effort and energy into expanding his wealth.
3. Unfortunately for this man, his efforts did nothing to improve his standing in the eyes of God. In fact, when God required his soul, he was rebuked for only storing up for himself earthy treasures and not seeking to be rich towards God. This poor man was in for a truly rude awakening when he got to where he was going.

B. What they will quickly realize is that while they were rich by earthly standards...they were actually poor and wretched without the presence of God in their lives.

1. This was the type of mindset that some of the church of Laodicea had at the point of John's writing. *"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will [!]spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Revelation 3:15-17)*
2. If we want to see these verses in action, we can look at Jesus's story concerning the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16:19-24**. Notice how Jesus describes the lifestyle of this rich man as opposed to Lazarus the poor man. *"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and long to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores." (Luke 16:19,20)*
3. This rich man lived in never ending luxury, and Lazarus in never ending misery. Yet, they found themselves in reversed places in eternity. How surprising it must have been for this rich man to have gained so much in this life, but have nothing to show for it once this life is over. His agony was unbearable, and he wished for even just a drop of water to give him some relief. How sad a place to be, but it is awaiting for those who focus only on themselves and fail to store up heavenly riches before God.

III. Religious People

A. According to the Washington Times, 84% of the world is religious.

1. 84% of the people who live on this earth have some sense of religion in their lives. A great number of these people claim Christianity. Some others claim Islam, and others Judaism. Then there are some who practice the faiths of the far east.
2. These people all have some concept of an all-powerful being. They believe in doing good and living morally good lives. Many of them seek to help the poor, and they even gather with others of like faith to worship and work together. Many of these individuals are extremely sincere in their beliefs and just as dedicated to do that which they believe to be right and good.

B. Truly one of the most terrifying verses of the Bible is from Jesus's sermon on the mount where He warns religious people of the danger of not practicing their religion as God desired. (**Matthew 7:21-23**)

1. It will be an extremely sad day for so many who will have lived their lives with the mindset that they were doing what is right, only to find out there they had not been practicing their religion

in the manner in which God desired. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven."* Just because someone is religious or seeks to serve the God of heaven doesn't mean that God automatically accepts them. As wrong as that might seem to us, God demands that we not only seek Him, but that we do things according to His will.

2. Notice the response of these people to Jesus. *"Lord, lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?"* In other words, *"Lord, did we not do a lot of things that we thought would please you?"*
3. These people will be sadly surprised to find out that not just any deeds of service will be accepted by God, but He expects for us to carry out our faith and religion in the manner that He has dictated. Such sad words will these people hear, *"I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."* God doesn't just demand that we be religious. He doesn't just demand that we be sincere, but He demands that we be obedient in what we do for Him. It will be such a sad day of shock for so many when they realize their eternal fate was determined by their unwillingness to do things God's way.

IV. Baptized People

- A. I am referring specifically to those who would consider themselves as members of the Body of Christ.
 1. These are those people who have confessed Jesus and been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are people who teach Bible classes, lead prayers, songs, and might even have present lessons. These are people like you and me.
 2. These are people who by every other person's standard are on their way to heaven on a first class ticket. However, all anyone else can see is the outward actions of these people because their hearts are not on full display for everyone else to consider.
- B. This group of people, above all else, might be the most surprised when they reach their eternal home.
 1. These people will find themselves in the same seat as the atheist, the rich man, and the run of the mill religious person, and to them it will be an absolutely shock. *"But I was baptized! I went to church! I didn't drink, steal, or kill! I came from a good Christian family!"* All of these things might very well be true about their lives on earth, but what they will find out is that God demands more from His people than just the right actions. God demands people who have truly given Him their hearts. He won't accept people who simply do the right thing while having their hearts far from Him. **(Matthew 15:8)**
 2. But really they shouldn't be surprised, right? They shouldn't be surprised to find out that God demands not just proper actions, but he demands that we truly give him our hearts. Our faith isn't determined by just checking boxes. Our faith isn't just something that we do, but it must be something that we are.
 3. Our faith isn't just about behavior modification, but it is about truly being transformed from the inside out. **(Romans 12:1,2)** Those who are transformed in their hearts, minds, and actions won't be a part of that group that is surprised to find their eternal home to be torture away from the presence of God.

I don't know about you, but these are some scary thoughts to consider...especially that last point. I'm not an atheists, I'm not rich in comparison to many others, and I wouldn't consider myself religious as the vast majority are in this life. However, I am someone who has confessed Jesus as Lord and has been baptized. The question I must ask myself is, have I truly given my heart to God. I know I'm giving every effort to do the right thing, but is it because I am convicted to do such in my heart. I hope we will all take some time for self examination to make sure that our actions and hearts are in the right place, so that we will not find ourselves surprised to have hell as our eternal home.

PRAYER *Our great God in heaven...we approach Your throne of grace and mercy asking that you would help each of us to be the type of person that will not be surprised when this life is over. Help us to be a people who have given our hearts fully to You. Help us to be a people who are motivated to do all things according to Your will. Helps us to be a people who find joy in Your will for us, and help us to live in such a way that heaven will be our eternal home. Please help us to keep our mind focused on you as we go throughout this week. Help us to overcome the Tempter, and may it all be done to your glory. We love you so much, Father, and we ask that You would be with us always. In Jesus name we pray...amen.*