



BEHIND THE CURTAIN:
WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE WE MISSING

KINGDOM GROUP STUDY



INTRODUCTION

Over the next four weeks, we will be pulling back the curtain of the physical, to get a glimpse into the spiritual realities that we cannot see. Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 “For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the forces of evil in the spiritual realms.”

Peering behind the curtain is *not* scary, but necessary. Necessary for living a fuller life in God. Theoretically, you could get away with living a quaint existence as a Christian without taking much interest in the supernatural. In fact, many choose this option. But you will always be poorer for it.

Understanding a biblical view of the afterlife will give you a fuller grasp on the love of God and the perfect justice he *wants you to know*. Heaven, in fact, affects us much more than simply being a destination for those in Christ. It is vital for *now*. Likewise, Hell is probably the most stereotyped image that is associated with Christians. We need to know what Hell is, why it is, and whom it is for.

The spiritual agents are among the most vague and fantastical elements of Christian belief, but also, among the most frequently mentioned characters in scripture.

And of course, there is the great Counsellor promised by Jesus, the Holy Spirit Himself. It is tragic how misrepresented he is by the Church. We would argue that you will always be ineffective as a Christian if you do not embrace all the Spirit has to offer. He was, in fact, Jesus’ idea and was sent intentionally by Jesus Himself (Acts 2:33). With the Spirit’s presence, come the gifts – given to the Church to express the reality of God to the world.

All of these important areas of Christian experience await us behind the curtain. Let us be bold and seek the fullness of God together.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: HEAVEN & HELL

Introduction:

There is perhaps, nothing more important than the doctrines of heaven and hell. But it is amazing how many differing views have developed on such a vital topic as this. The narrative and understanding of the afterlife has developed from Old Testament literature, through to Jesus' teachings and other New Testament writers. It then changed again with the influence of Greek philosophers like Plato, and then taking another form through the influence of medieval art. So, what does the bible really say about the reality of Heaven and Hell? Let's peel back the curtain of the physical and have a look...

HEAVEN

Q1. When you think about Heaven, what are some ideas or images that come to your mind?

Q2. What are some ideas or images about Heaven that are held by others in our society?

Read Revelation 21:1-22:5 and Isaiah 65:17-25, where we find incredible descriptions, not of "heaven" so much as the "new heavens and new earth" and "new Jerusalem". Now read John 14:2-3 where Jesus refers to "heaven" as his Father's house, in which there are many rooms prepared by Jesus for those who believe in him.

Q3. What stands out to you as the best features from these descriptions? What would you most look forward to about being there?

Q4. In what ways are these descriptions of Heaven different from the ideas or images you discussed in questions 1 and 2?

Q5. Read John 14:4-7. What practically does it look like to find the "way" to Heaven?

Q6. The writer of Hebrews describes our hope in God's promises as "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (6:19). How does your hope of Heaven affect your life today?

HELL

Q1. When you think about Hell, what are some ideas or images that come to your mind?

Q2. What are some ideas or images about Hell that are held by others in our society?

Commentary: Before God establishes his new, perfect "heaven", he will act in judgement against all sin and evil. We find this judgement described in passages such as Revelation 20:7-15, Matthew 13:36-43, Matthew 25:31-46 (read or summarise these as time allows).

Q3. What stands out to you as the worst thing about Hell?

Q4. Read Mark 9:42-49 (or summarise if time is limited). Jesus is using hyperbolic language to make a very important point: you should do whatever it takes to avoid Hell. Do you think we/you take these warnings seriously enough?

Q5. Read Luke 16:19-31 (or summarise if time is limited). Have you "listened" to the God and responded in repentance and faith to the gospel of Jesus?

Q6. The rich man begged for Lazarus to go and warn his family, so they could turn to God and "not also come to this place of torment". Do you feel this same sense of urgency for your family and friends? Have you warned them about what awaits those who reject Jesus?