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**The Common Denominator - Part 2**

By Tal Davis

What do all the following famous TV and movie stars all have in common?

Tom Cruise; Jennifer Lawrence; Tom Hanks; Meryl Streep; Robert Duval; Cate Blanchett; Morgan Freeman; Viola Davis; Harrison Ford; Glenn Close; Will Smith; Angelina Jolie; Dustin Hoffman; Faye Dunaway; Denzel Washington; Natalie Portman; Brad Pitt; Nicole Kidman; Anne Hathaway; Meg Ryan; Russell Crowe; Sally Field; Kevin Costner; Sharon Stone; Mel Gibson; Sandra Bullock; and Clint Eastwood.

So what did you think? They are all from the same state? No. They were all born in the same month? No. They are all Republicans? No. They were all born in America? No. They are all members of the same religion? No. If you haven't figured it out yet, it is actually pretty obvious. Think about it. The common denominator of all the above celebrities is that they, unlike those in Part 1, are all still alive. That's right, every one of those famous people who you probably still see quite often on TV and in movies are still living (at least as of this writing)! However, and this is key point, every one of them is bound to die (some a lot sooner than others).

In the first installment of this two part series we discussed the inevitable fact that every one will someday die. (Read it here: <https://www.marketfaith.org/2025/01/the-common-denominator-part-1-tal-davis/>) It is the one common denominator of all humanity (although according to the Bible there were at least two exceptions: Enoch [Gen. 5:24] and Elijah [2 Kings 2:11]). We talked about what happens at death to those who are believers in Christ. Christians will go immediately into the presence of Jesus in a spiritual intermediate state called Paradise. There they await the return of Christ when they will be resurrected bodily. Non-Christians as death also remain conscious at death but will not be with Christ. They too will await the return of Christ and the coming judgment of all mankind.

In this Part 2 we will examine the bigger picture of life after death. We will look at the ultimate fates of both the saved and the unsaved after the final judgment. It is important to note first that Jesus said everyone, good and evil, will live for eternity: *"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"* (Matthew 25:46). The Greek word *aionios* means eternal or everlasting and includes both quality and duration.

We will begin with the eternal fate of the believers in Christ. The Bible teaches that eternal life will be a home in Heaven for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. This was guaranteed by His resurrection.

Let's examine four points about the eternal life for the believer.

First, it begins at the judgment seat of God. The Bible constantly speaks of Divine justice. For instance, Paul says in Romans 14:10, *"For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."* He repeats it in 2 Corinthians 5:10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."*

So God's judgment is for all people, including Christians. However, our salvation will not be determined by our works but received by grace through faith in Jesus (see Ephesians 2:8, 9). Believers depend on Christ alone to face God's judgment. Those who are saved will be assured to go to Heaven.

Second the eternal fate of the believer will be in the presence of God. The Apostle John describes, in the book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, an indescribable vision of Heaven. He identifies it as the "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:1-7). In verses 3 and 4 he proclaims: *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.'"*

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John says God's presence (like the Old Testament tabernacle) is eternally among men. This presence results in joy, no death, and no sorrow for believers living with Him. He uses picturesque imagery to describe the indescribable. The reality would be so much more! Thus Christians will be forever in God's presence and love. They will eternally grow in the knowledge of the infinite God (so it will not be dull in heaven).

The eternal fate of believers is also described as a beautiful city. In Revelation, the Apostle John described a city that is as beautiful as we can imagine. In Revelation 21, John says he saw the New Jerusalem, descending from heaven like a bride adorned (21:2, 10-11). He even describes its walls, gates, streets, and dimensions (21:12-21).

*It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

*The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles (12,000 stadia); its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards (144 cubits), according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh,*

*jasinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.*

It helps to understand that in Hebrew numerology, 1,000 is a perfect number. In this case, it is multiplied by another perfect number, twelve. It is then multiplied again by itself. So, 12,000 stadia times 12,000 equals 144 million square stadia. This enormous number means that the heavenly city is spacious and perfect to house God's redeemed people. Verses 13 and 21 speak of twelve (there's that perfect number again) gates of pearl. The implication is that we enter the city through pearl gates reflecting the Pearl of Great Price: Jesus Christ.

John also mentions that no temple was found in the city nor was a sun or moon needed.

*I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. (21:22-23)*

Finally, Heaven will be like a garden of abundant life. In Revelation 22 John also sees Heaven as a wonderful garden. In its midst is the Tree of Life, nourished by the River of Life and "bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:2).

Heaven is a place where we will have all our needs met: water, food, health, etc. The source of it all is not the Sun, but God's eternal light (22:5). This scene contrasts with the Fallen Garden of Eden.

If you are a Christian, you have a great eternal adventure to come. Faith in Christ makes you an inheritor of all that God has in store in heaven. Heaven is our destiny, and we should live in light of it today.

Now let's contemplate the awful fate of the unbelievers. The Bible clearly

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describes the final fate of the unbeliever as one of eternal separation from God in a place called hell. Let's face it, this is one of the most difficult Christian doctrines to address. It is often denied, but it cannot be ignored if we believe the Bible and Jesus Himself. Both teach that those who reject the gospel and do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord will be separated from God for eternity.

One primary biblical source for studying this question is again the book of Revelation. In that writing, the Apostle John described the visions he saw of the events of the conclusion of time. Revelation 20:11-15 is one example of what John envisioned as the fate of humanity:

*11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

From this and other passages, we can learn four facts about the final fates of unbelievers. Remember, even as John tried to describe heaven in human language, he was also describing the indescribable when he spoke of the fate of the lost.

First we learn that the eternal state of unbelievers will be an experience of unending death. The Bible describes an intense form of spiritual death for the lost. For instance, Paul says, "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). The consequence of sin is not only physical cessation of life but eternal

separation from God's presence. It ultimately results in what John called the "second death" (see Revelation 2:10, 11 and 20:6, 14). This "*second death*" refers to eternal separation from God.

Second, eternity also will be a state of punishment for those who have not repented of sin.

The writer of Hebrews in chapter 10, verses 28-31, contrasted those who rebelled against Moses' Law with rebels against the Son of God. Clearly he says that those rejecting Christ are more deserving of punishment.

*28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." 31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Paul, in Romans 2:5-8 also underscored the righteousness of God's wrath.

*5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*

It is true that God is all-loving, but he is also holy and just and must punish sin. God is the perfect judge and demands perfect justice. And we are all guilty! However, God took the punishment upon Himself in Christ on the cross. Nonetheless, He will not

deprive any one of his or her will to reject His offer. Those who choose to reject or ignore Christ's pardon will suffer the full extent of punishment for their sin.

Third, the eternal fate of unbelievers is also described in Scripture as a place of outer darkness. Jesus described the domain of the unsaved as "Outer Darkness." That is to say, it will be without the light of God's presence.

At the end of Jesus' parable of the unfaithful servant, in Matthew 25:30, He says "*And throw this good-for-nothing slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

He used the same imagery in Matthew 22:13, "*Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*"

The Apostle Peter also used that description in 2 Peter 2:17: "*These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.*"

Likewise, Jude 13 speaks of the wicked as ... "*wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.*"

For the unsaved eternity will be a state of absolute darkness and loneliness. Despite what some people like to think, there will be no wild parties in hell. They will be lost, alone, and in eternal night.

Finally, the lost's ultimate fate is described in terms of unquenchable fire. When most people think of hell they see it as sort like a boiling pit or oven. Much of that imagery is a result of medieval art and writings like Dante's Inferno. But is this place of eternal fire the Bible's picture of what hell will be? Let's take a look at what it says.

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus told the story of Lazarus and the Rich man. Lazarus was a poor but righteous man who died and went to Abraham's Bosom (heaven). The rich man who had not lived righteously in his life was sent to Hades. From there the rich man called out, "*Father Abraham! Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!*"

Jesus has Abraham reply to him sadly, "*Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.*"

Other key passages that use this same imagery are below.

In Matthew 18: 8, 9 Jesus says, "*If your hand or your foot causes your downfall, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes your downfall, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, rather than to have two eyes and be thrown into hellfire!*"

Mark 9:46-48 (parallel) describes as "*where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*"

Jude 23 talks of the need to show love to "save others" by "*snatching [them] from the fire.*"

Hebrews 10:27 warns "*but a terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire.*"

Revelation 20:14-15 says, "*This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*"

Revelation 21:8,9 states, "*But the cowards, unbelievers, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars – heir share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.*"

So, though it may hard to swallow, burning imagery is indeed one way the Bible describes hell. But, we must remember an important interpretative principle. These images of hell, like John's visions of heaven, are descriptions of the indescribable. We must look at the Bible's total picture. In some ways they almost seem to contradict (i.e. darkness vs. fire). Nonetheless, we must keep in mind that they all describe the horrible reality of eternal separation from God. We must not understate it.



This concludes our study of “the common denominator”: death. Yes, we are all bound to die and then face judgment. As Hebrews 9:27 warns, “*And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.*” However, what happens after death depends on what we do before we die. The deciding issue is how we relate to Jesus Christ. If we repent of our sins and receive Him as our personal Lord and Savior, then we have the confidence that when we die we will go immediately to be with Him to await the resurrection. Those who do not receive Him will suffer in a spiritual state separated from God waiting for the final judgment.

At the final judgment, those who have been faithful followers of Christ will inherit eternal life with Jesus in Heaven. Those who have willfully failed to repent and receive Him will spend eternity separated from Him in hell. Hopefully some of the TV and movie stars we mentioned at the beginnings of these two installments are Christians. There are some you know. The key is what they, and we, do with Jesus? As Jesus Himself said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*”

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