

Hope Presbyterian Church
Adult Faith Formation Sermon-Based Bible Study

August 16, 2026

“Heaven and Hell”

#4 in the series *You Asked for It*

Scripture Texts

John 3:16-21 (NIV), Psalm 139:8 (NRSVUE),
John 14: 1-3 (NIV), Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV),
Romans 8:1-4 (NIV)



Note: Congregation members were asked to submit topics for this sermon series. This week’s sermon addresses questions about Heaven and Hell.

1. What stood out to you about the message?
2. Literature, art, religion, and culture have influenced our ideas about Hell. Some believe Hell is a phenomenon of the afterlife, while others believe it’s the worst of what we experience during our earthly lives. Others believe there is no such thing as Hell.
 - What or who has influenced your beliefs about Hell?
 - What questions, if any, have you had about the idea or existence of Hell?
3. **Read John 3: 17-19 and Romans 8:1-4.**

John and Paul don’t use the word Hell to describe the consequence of not believing in Jesus as the Son of God, but instead describe judgment that results from disbelief. They also remind us that Jesus’ mission has not been to condemn but to provide salvation for all.

 - Why have some in the Church used images of Hell as a tool to frighten us to faith?
 - What does this practice of using fear reveal about who has the responsibility for the judgment of our souls?
4. **Read Psalm 139:8 (NRSVUE).**

Scripture doesn’t identify Hell as a literal place but includes words and descriptions such as Sheol (Hebrew) and Hades (Greek), which have been translated as “the realm of the dead,” and Gehenna (Greek), a region near Jerusalem, that became a metaphor for hell and divine judgment.

 - While Scripture doesn’t describe Hell as an actual place, why do you think we have identified it as a literal destination for some in the afterlife?
 - What does this verse teach us about being separated from God?
5. A memorable scene from the 1989 movie *Field of Dreams* portrays Ray Kinsella meeting the ghost of his father on a baseball field Ray has built in the middle of a cornfield. “Is this heaven?” asks his father, once a professional baseball player. “This is Iowa,” Ray replies, realizing that maybe this place, where he’s pursued a dream with the love and support of his wife and their daughter, could very well be heaven.
 - What images of heaven has our culture perpetuated?
 - What ideas and images of heaven do you have?

6. Read John 3: 16, 21 and John 14:1-3.

Consider how Jesus' words in these passages were offered to the disciples to comfort and instruct them about life when Jesus was no longer physically on earth and about life after their deaths.

- How do you think they might have received Jesus' words about life after death?
- What assures us despite the levels of ambiguity we may have about Heaven?

7. Read Revelation 21: 1-4.

- How do you understand the concepts of restoration - making all things new - in this passage?
How does this passage affirm your understanding of Heaven?
- How have the scripture readings and discussion about Heaven and Hell strengthened your faith?