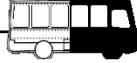


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PREFACE



Summary

In the opening preface of the book, Lewis elaborates on what we all should know—that you cannot have both Heaven and Hell at the same time. It’s either one or the other. This sounds obvious, right? But often we live our lives contrary to that belief by clinging to those worldly vices and values that have no place in the Christian life, much less Heaven. According to Lewis, “Evil can be undone, but it cannot ‘develop’ into good.” The fact is, we must wholly reject evil for Heaven to be fully embraced.

If we insist on keeping Hell (or even Earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell.

Discussion Questions

William Blake wrote *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* between 1790 and 1793. In this book, he tells us that good and evil aren’t really what we think they are. They’re just different kinds of energies, and both are needed to keep the world going. The Bible and other religious texts, he says, have been responsible for a lot of the misinformation we’ve been given. He claims that two types of people exist: the “energetic creators,” or devils from Hell, and the “rational organizers,” or angels from heaven, of which he claims both are necessary to life.

1. Why do you think humanity is constantly searching for opportunities to blur the lines between good and evil? Why is this dangerous ground to tread?

2. What attempts do you see in today's culture of trying to "marry" Heaven and Hell, and how do you think this dysfunctional marriage has changed culture today?

3. Read Isaiah 5:20. What did Isaiah say to warn the nation of Israel that they were in rebellion against God? What specifically were they doing? Do you think God's standards have changed since the time of Isaiah? Why or why not?

4. Lewis disagreed with Blake. In his view, all good comes from God, nothing good comes from Hell, and there can be no legitimate marriage of the two. Read Matthew 5:29–30. On the journey to Heaven, which "luggage" cannot be carried along and why might we have to leave our "right hand" and "right eye" behind?

5. Explain what Lewis meant by "Evil can be undone, but it cannot 'develop' into good." According to Romans 12:21, how is evil overcome?

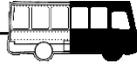
6. What does Lewis say will happen if we insist on keeping Hell? If we accept Heaven, what will we not be able to keep? If we accept Heaven, what will we find?

7. Why does Lewis put in his “disclaimer” at the conclusion of the Preface?

Answer Guide and Scripture References Available at
www.BrownChairBooks.com

PREFACE DISCUSSION NOTES:

CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE OF HELL



As the story begins, Lewis, also our narrator, finds himself waiting in a long line for a magical bus ride in a dimly uncomfortable grey town. His companions in line are argumentative, combative, and generally disagreeable and of differing economic and educational backgrounds. As the story progresses we learn that these characters are damned souls on vacation, and that the grey town is Purgatory for some and the outskirts of Hell for others.

Why on earth they insist on coming I can't imagine. They won't like it at all when we get there, and they'd really be much more comfortable at home.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe in detail the mood, atmosphere, images, and depictions of the grey town. Do you find Lewis's depiction of Hell or Purgatory "accurate"?

2. Although the grey town is revealed within the contexts of the story to be the outer limits of Hell, or Purgatory for those who will eventually reach Heaven, the reader is to consider this an imaginative representation of Hell rather than an accurate, biblical representation of the real Hell. Using the following Bible passages, describe the nature of Hell. In your own words, how would you describe Hell to a friend?

- a) Revelation 14:10–11 –
- b) 2 Thessalonians 1:9 –
- c) Revelation 21:8 –
- d) Matthew 25:41 –
- e) Mark 9:44–49 –
- f) Revelation 20:10 –
- g) Matthew 13:41–42 –
- h) Matthew 3:12 –
- i) Daniel 12:2 –
- j) Luke 16:23–24 –

3. The souls that Lewis encounters while waiting for and getting on the bus seem to represent various forms of sin in what used to be called the capital sins or what is commonly referred to as the seven deadly sins. Associate the different personalities he encounters in line and on the bus with the appropriate sin below.

- a) Envy – the desire to have an item, an experience, or feeling that someone else possesses

- b) Gluttony – an excessive, ongoing consumption of food or drink
- c) Greed – an excessive pursuit of material possessions
- d) Lust – an uncontrollable passion or longing, especially for sexual desires
- e) Vanity or Pride – excessive view of one’s self without regard to others
- f) Sloth – excessive laziness or the failure to act and utilize one’s talents
- g) Wrath or Anger – uncontrollable feelings of anger and hate toward another person

4. As people continue to leave the bus line, what principle is Lewis trying to establish regarding a town in which any real life is absent yet there is little desire to move beyond it?

5. The souls complain about the bus driver, saying, “Why can’t he behave naturally?” Read 1 Corinthians 2:14. Why do unbelievers have difficulty relating to or understanding a believer’s joy?

6. The tousle-haired poet cannot imagine why the other souls would insist on coming on the bus and concludes that they would be much more comfortable at home. What parallel is there to our comfort and how we deal with sin? Read 1 John 1:8 and Romans 12:9. How do we break free of that sin comfort zone?

7. What do you think of Lewis's idea that there will be fish and chips and movies and advertising in Hell?