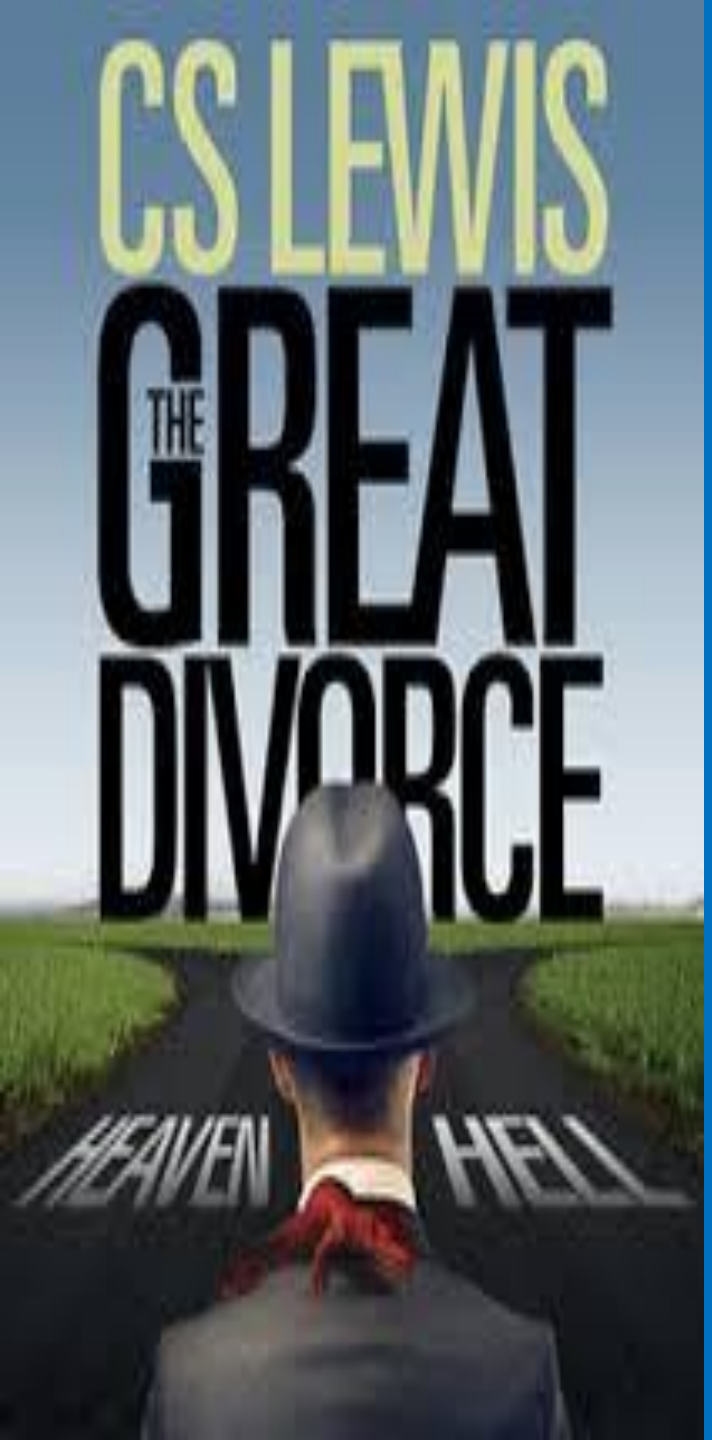
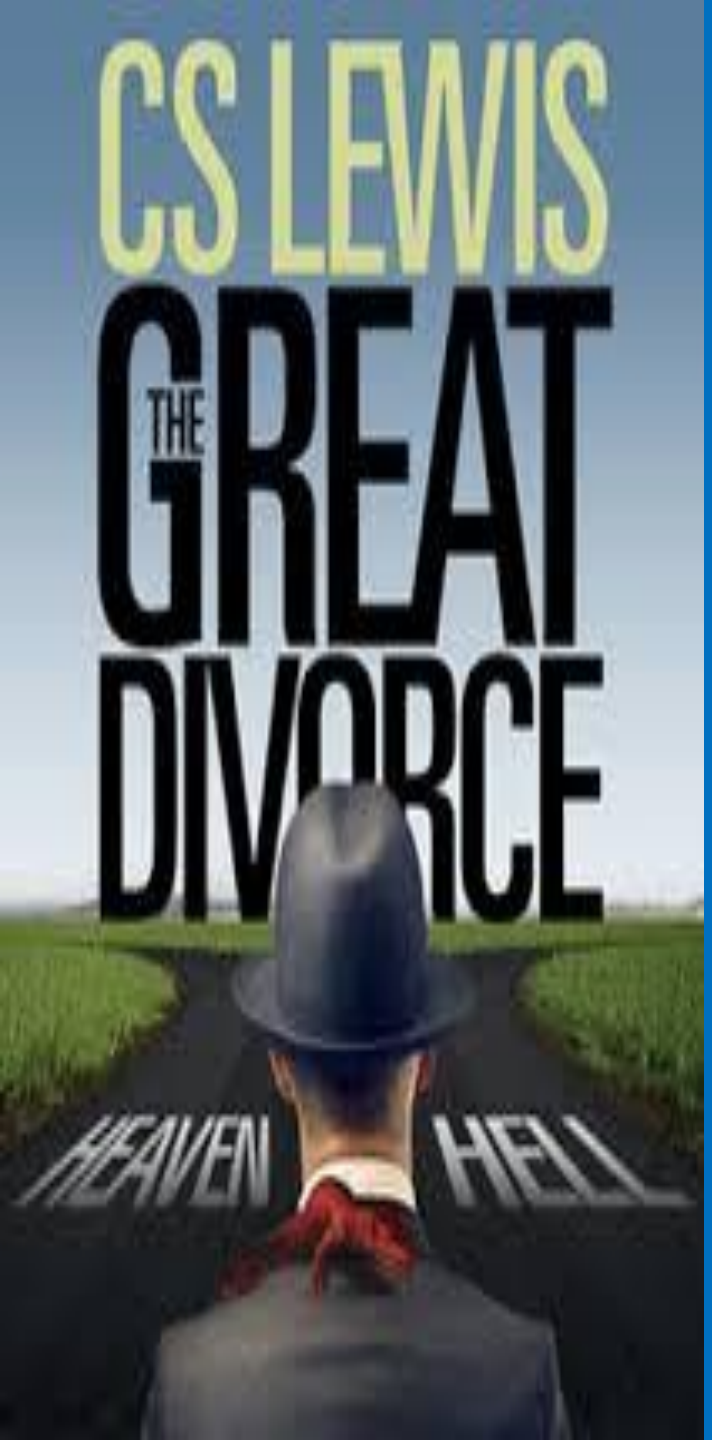


The Great Divorce Study by C.S. Lewis

Rev. Dr. Chris Ascher

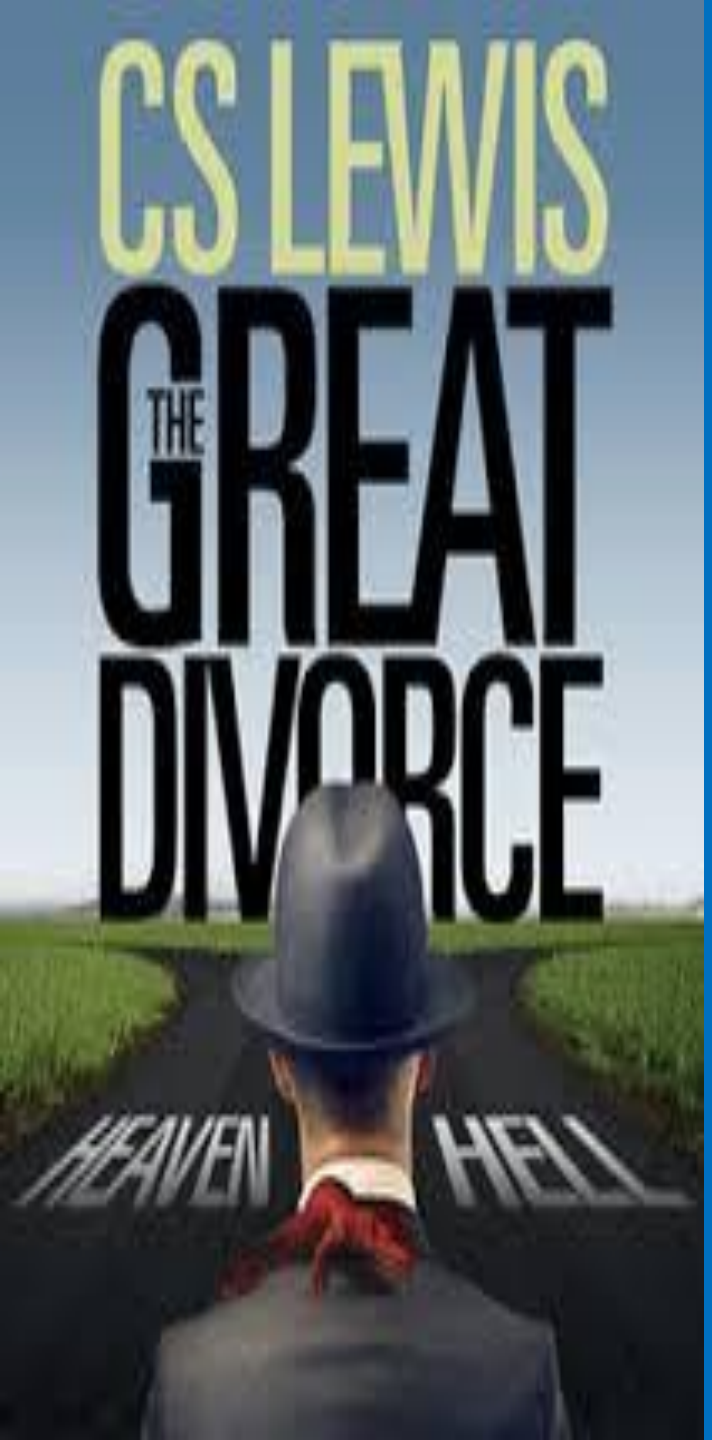
Summer 2020

Chapter Nine: Questions and Answers



Preface

After witnessing a variety of conversations and actions between Ghosts and Spirits, Lewis is confused, miserable and somewhat fearful. Then, at last, he is approached by his guiding spirit, who is none other than author, poet and Christian minister George MacDonald.

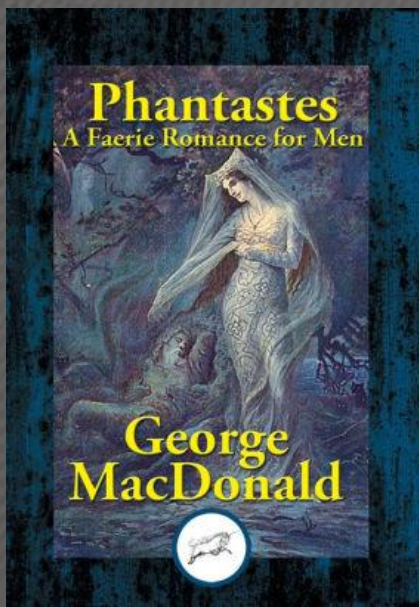


Discussion Questions:

1. Lewis begins to gush when he unexpectedly encounters his earthly “hero”, George MacDonald. MacDonald stops Lewis, assuring him that he knows all about his admiration and past, even noting that his “memory misleads you in one or two particulars.” What earthly “hero” would you lavish with praise if you met them in Heaven and why?

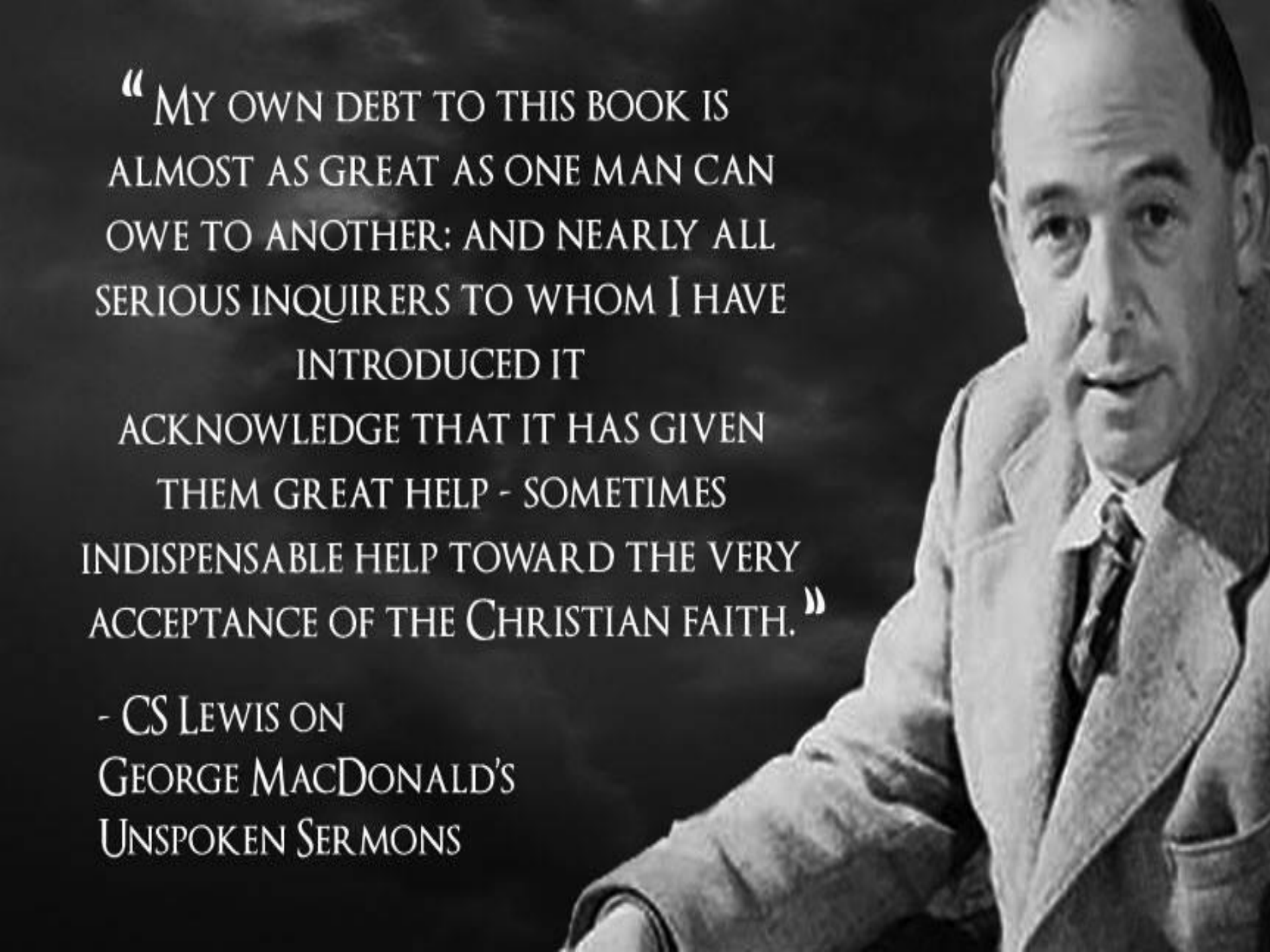
GEORGE MACDONALD

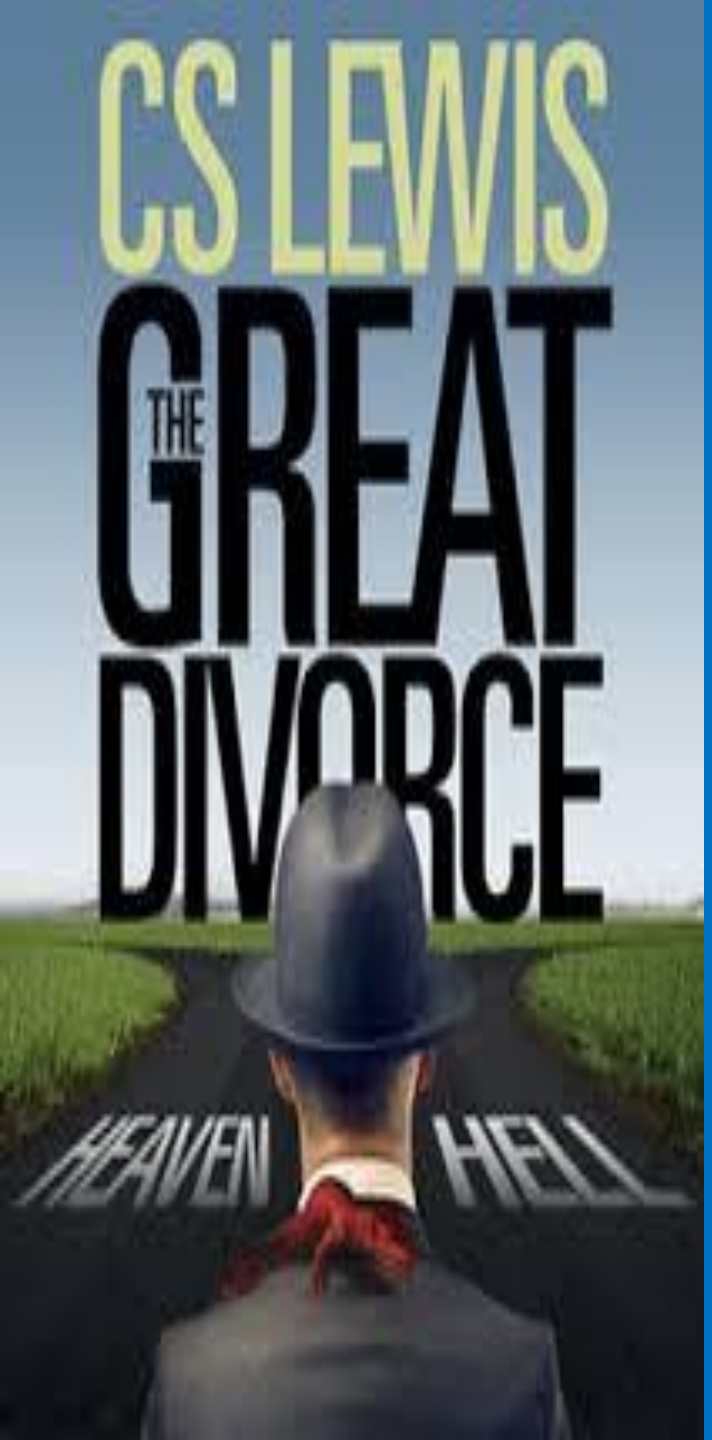
1824–1905



"My own debt to this book is almost as great as one man can owe to another: and nearly all serious inquirers to whom I have introduced it acknowledge that it has given them great help - sometimes indispensable help toward the very acceptance of the Christian faith."

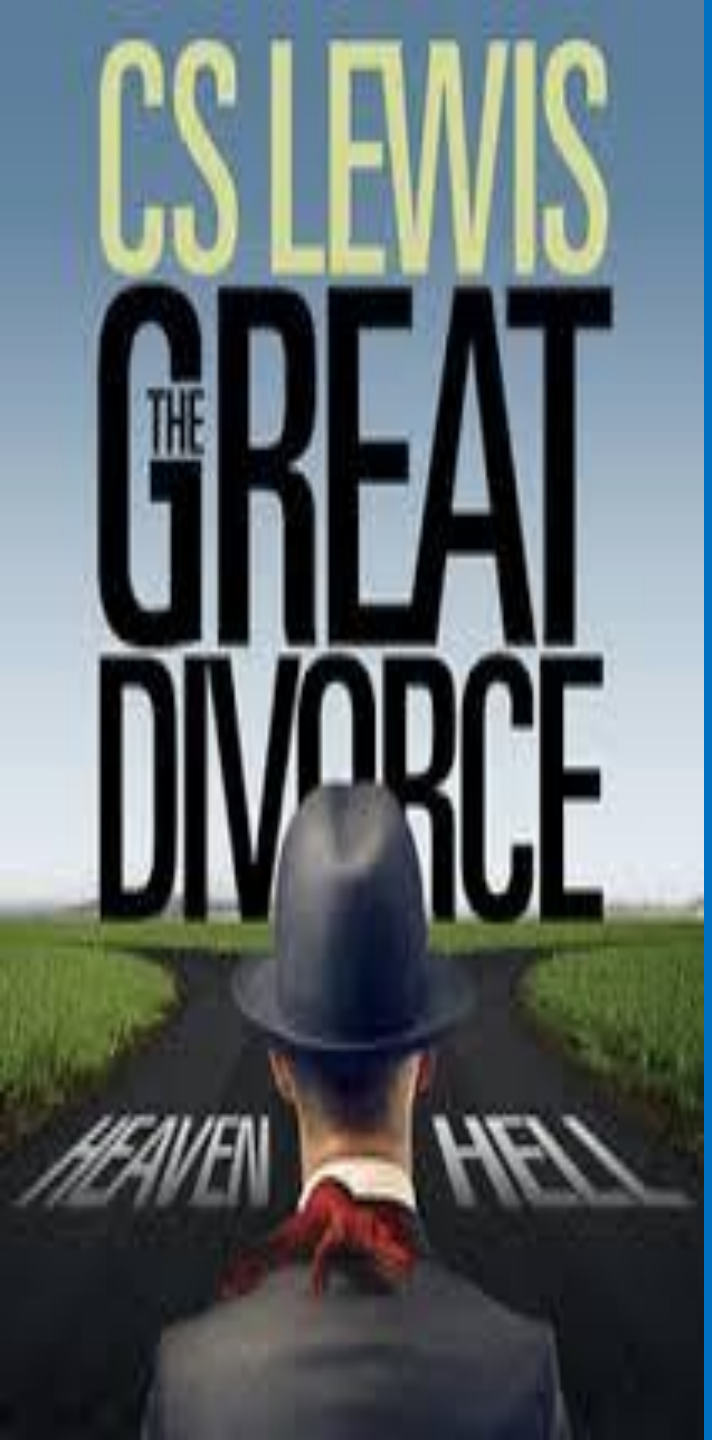
- CS Lewis on George MacDonald's Unspoken Sermons





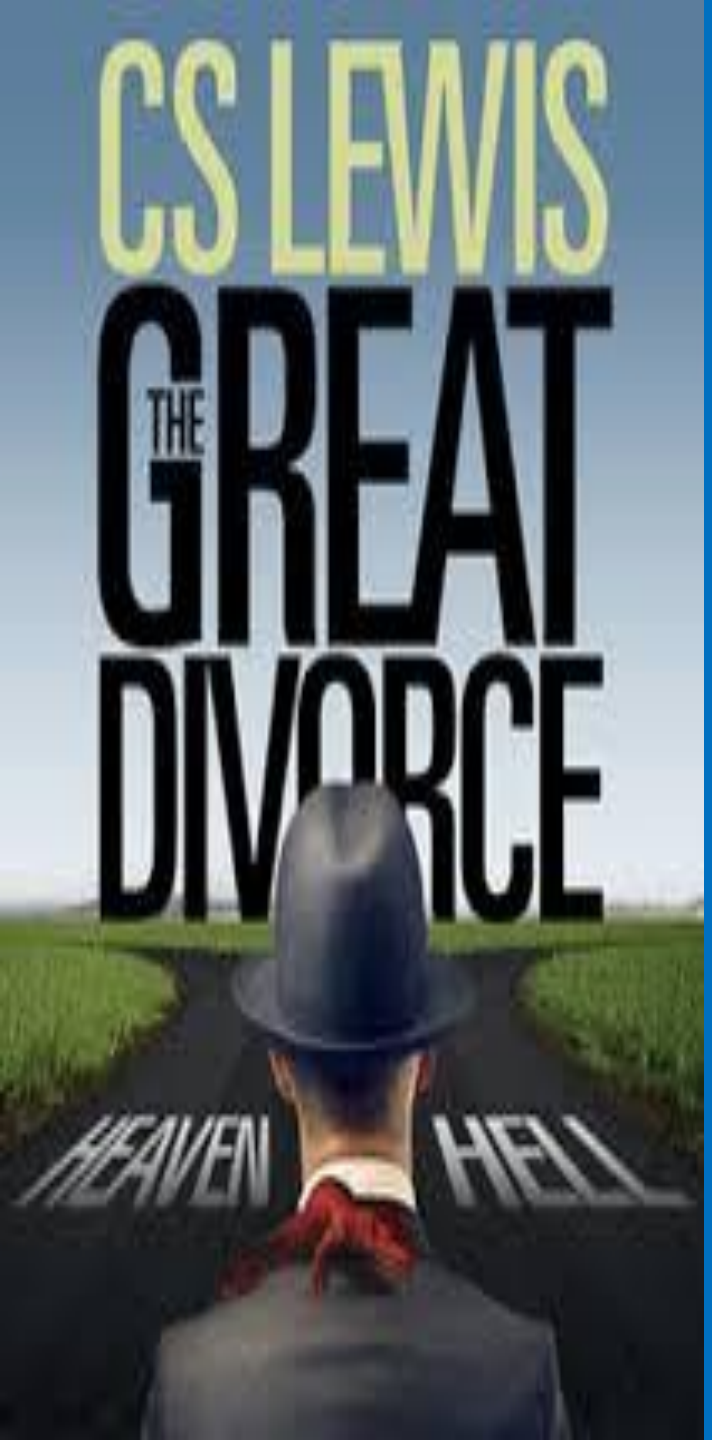
Discussion Questions:

2. MacDonald persuades Lewis to continue on with his questions about this place he finds himself in. What are Lewis' questions?



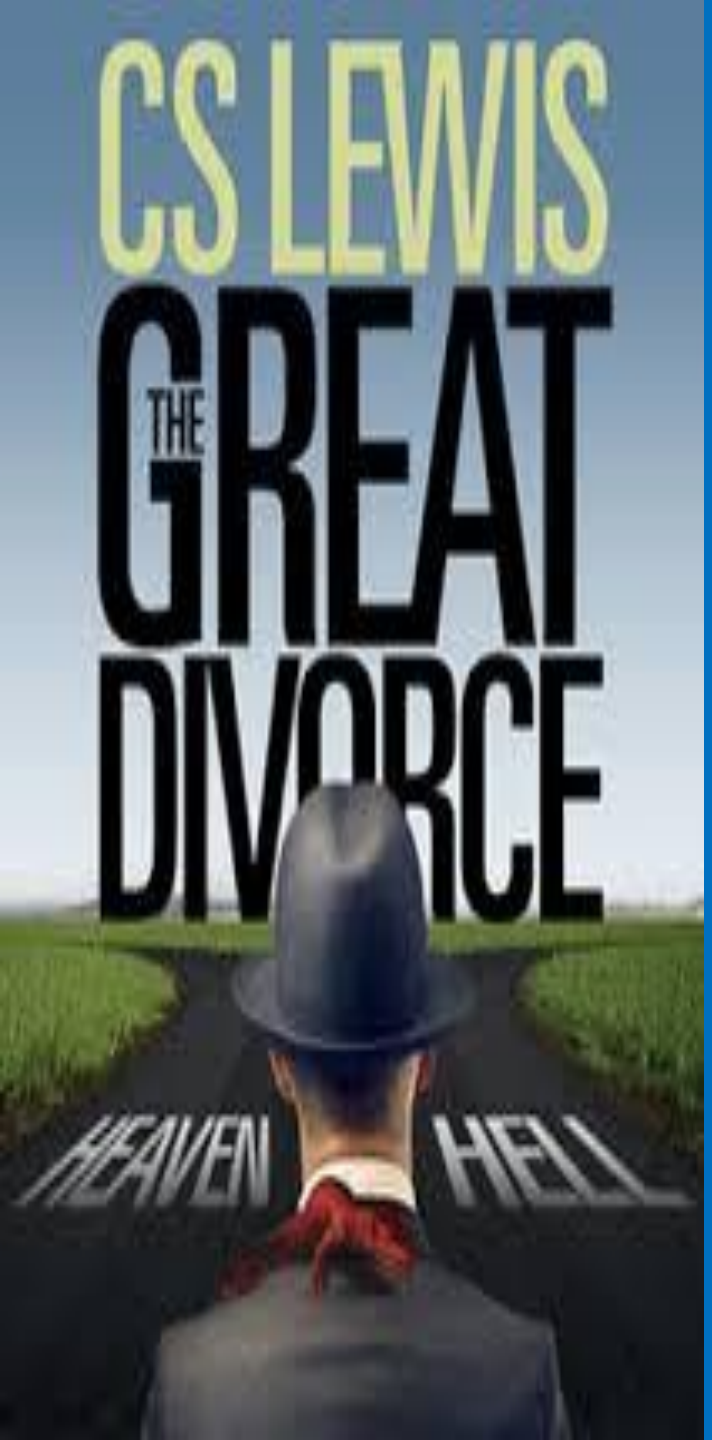
Discussion Questions:

3. What is the Refrigerium? It appears as though the ghosts from Hell take these excursions all the time. What other destinations do they choose?



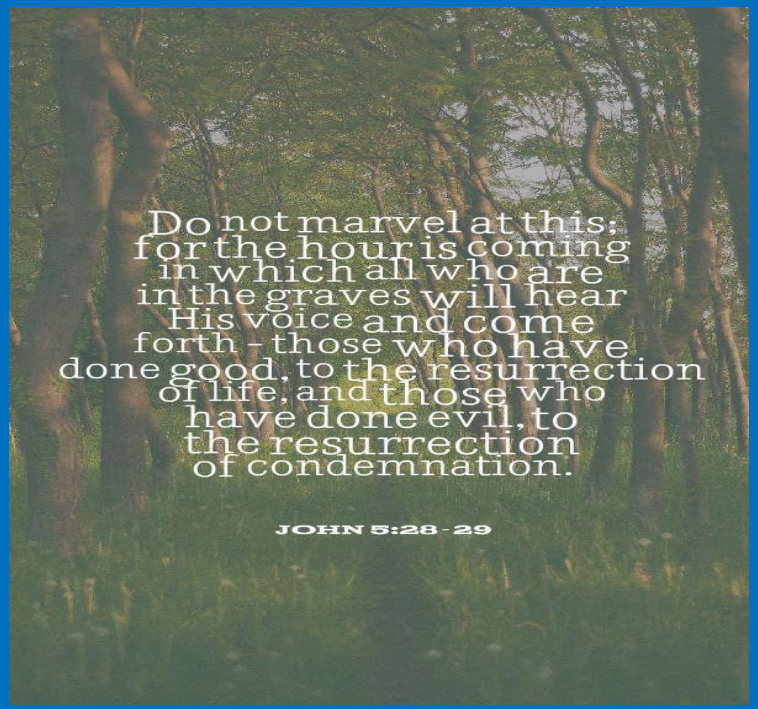
Discussion Questions:

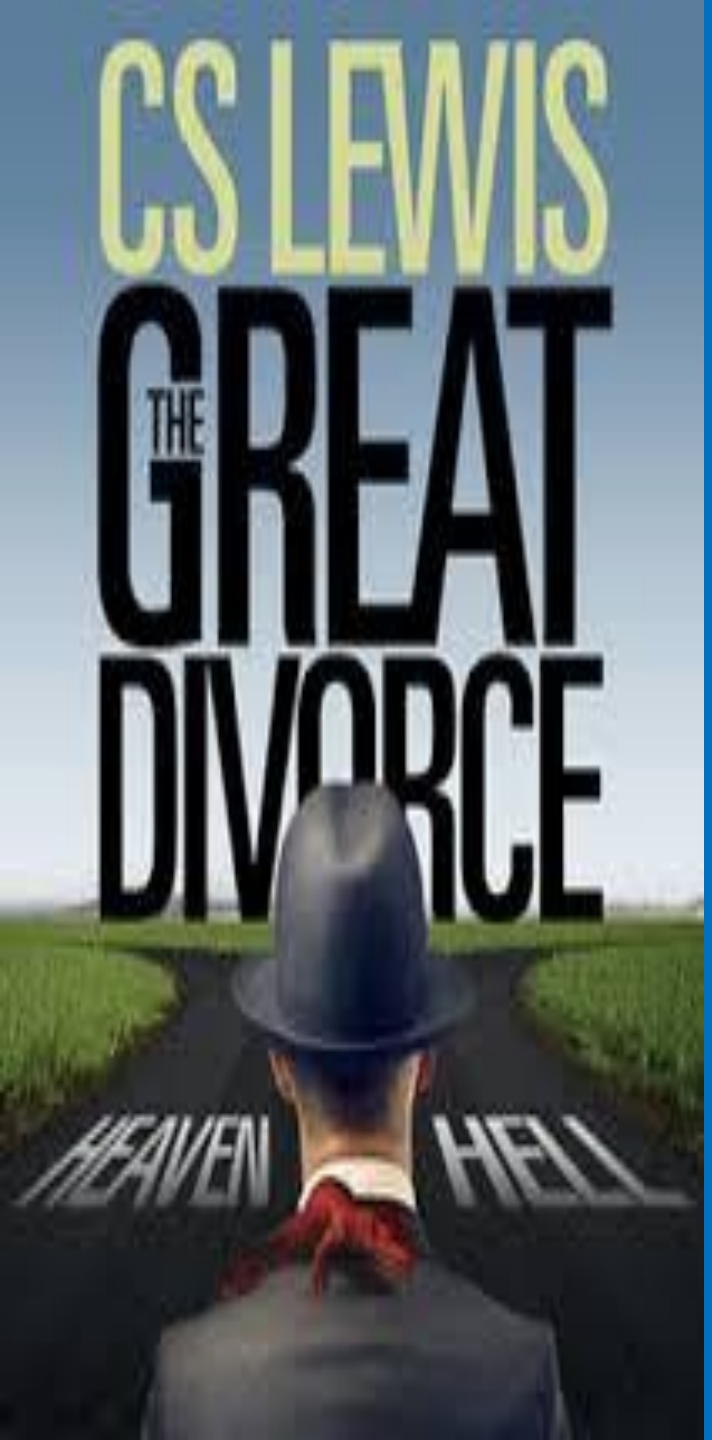
4. Lewis asks MacDonald, “Is judgment not final?” Is there really a way out of Hell into Heaven?” What is MacDonald’s reply to whether or not our eternal destination is determined before death?



Discussion Questions:

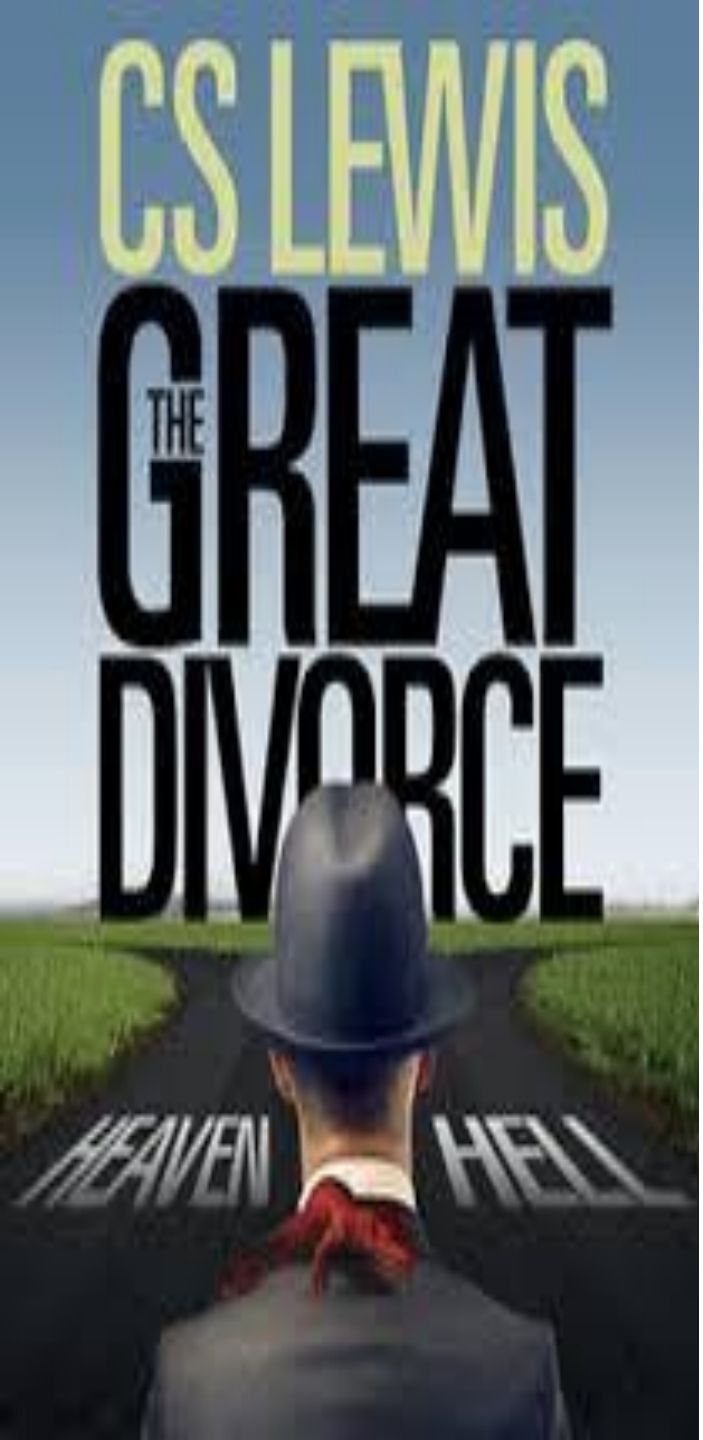
5. The story seems to suggest that we have a real choice after death – that there is salvation for the dead. Read John 5:28-29.





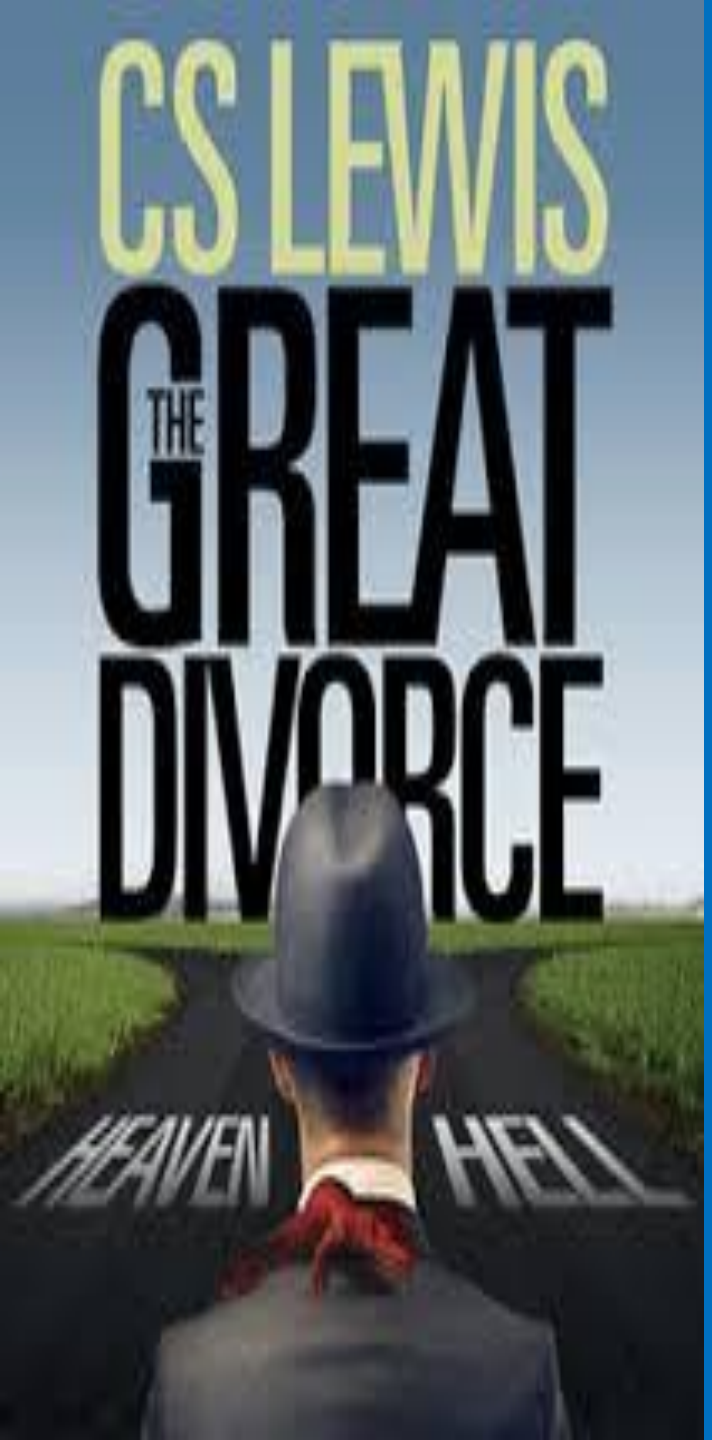
Discussion Questions:

5. What is a Christian's response as to whether or not our eternal destination is determined before death? What options did the rich man have in Hell in Luke 16:19-31?



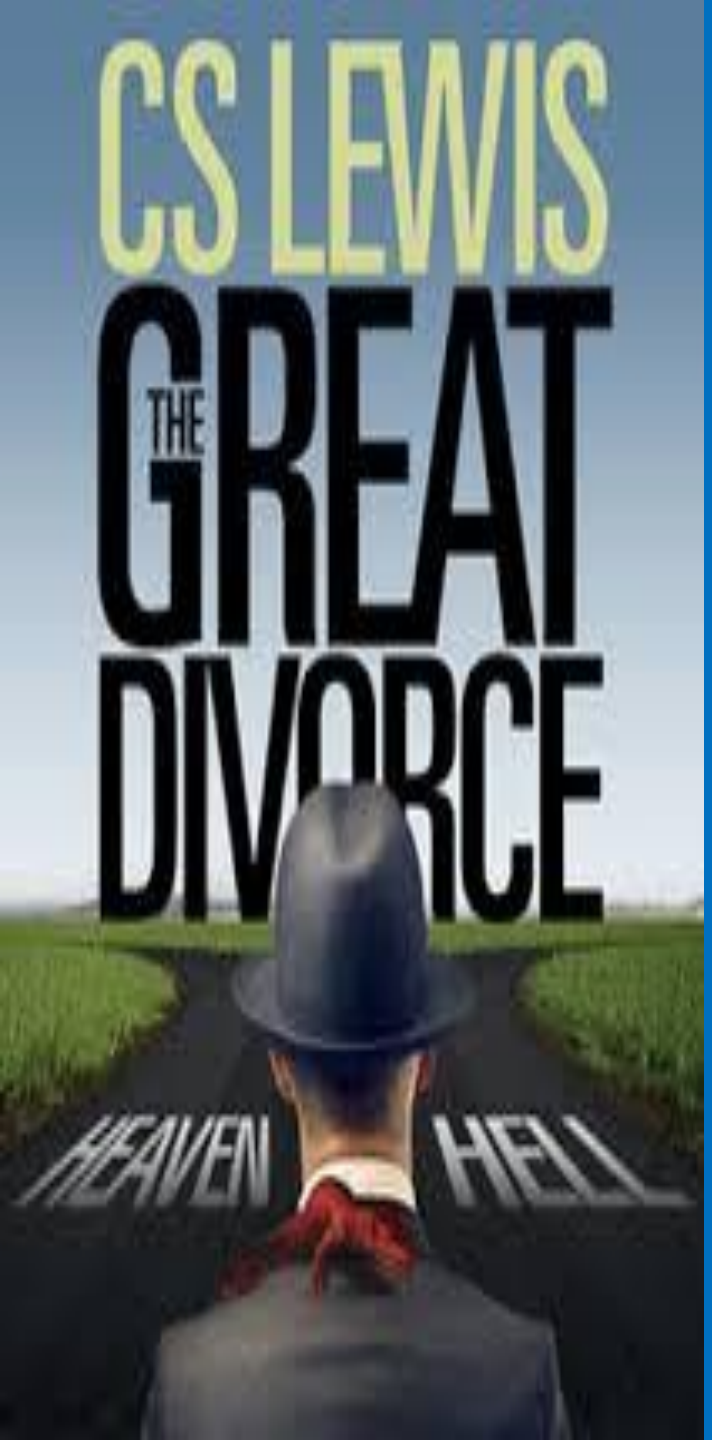
Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (part 1)
Luke 16:19-31

There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'



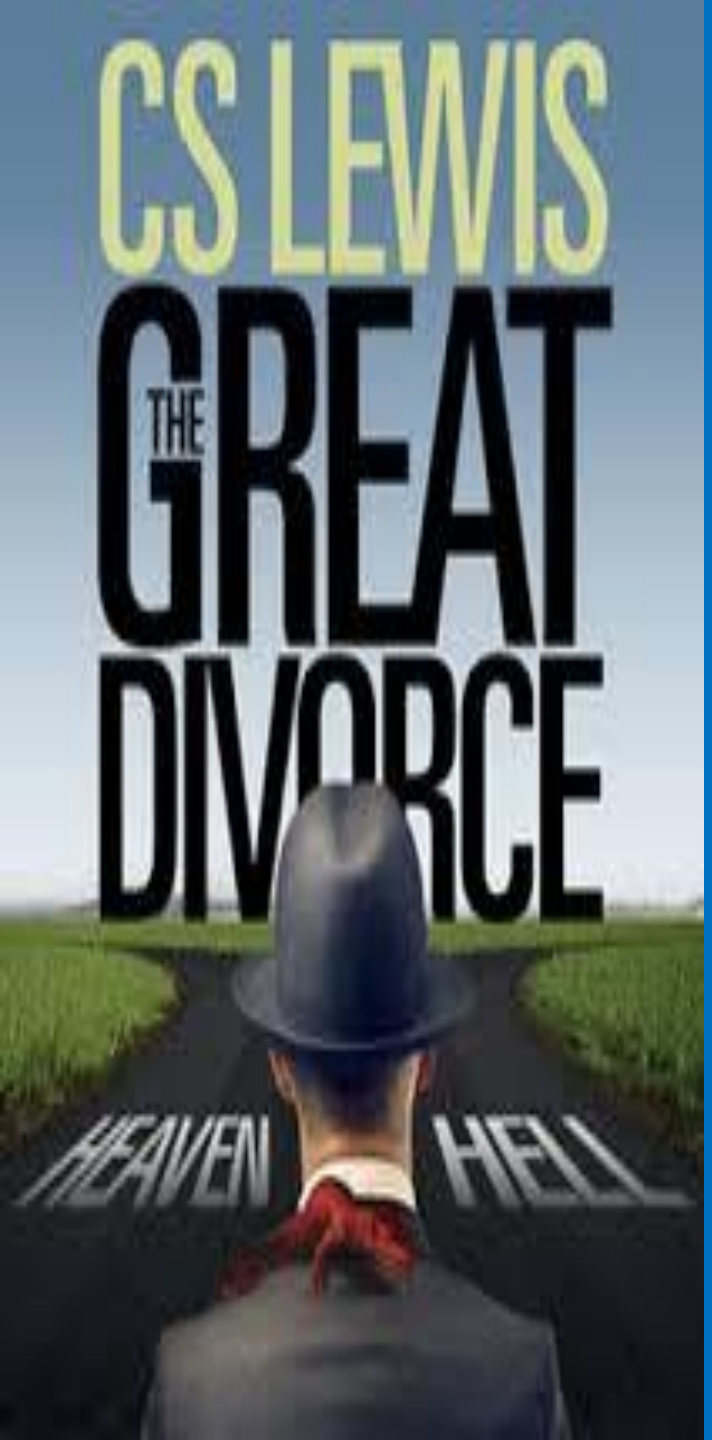
Discussion Questions:

6. Why is it comforting to hope "that heaven, once attained, works backwards and will turn even that agony into a glory" or, in other words, that all of your past troubles will now be set in context?

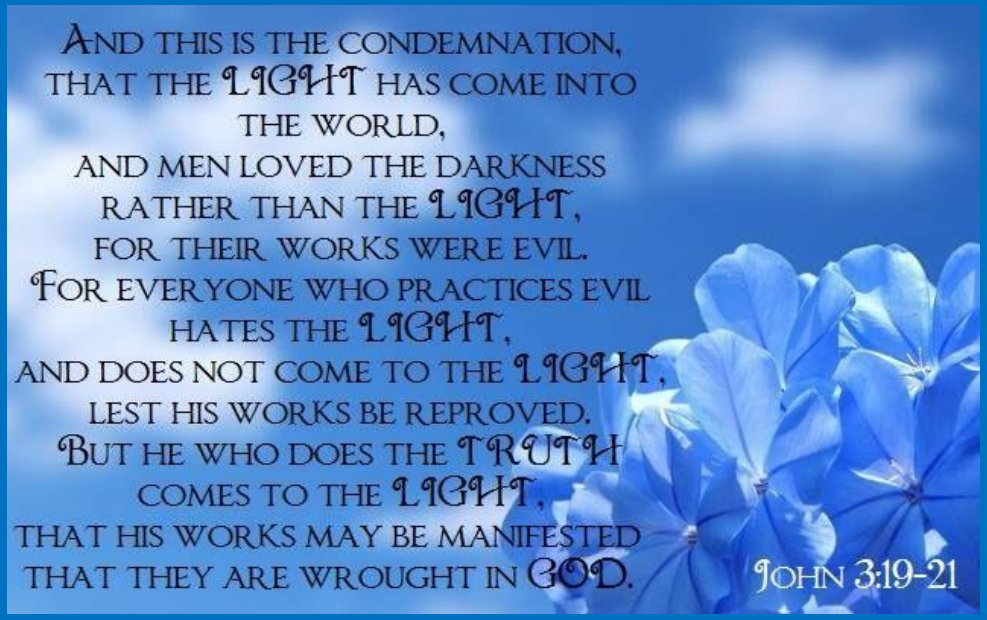


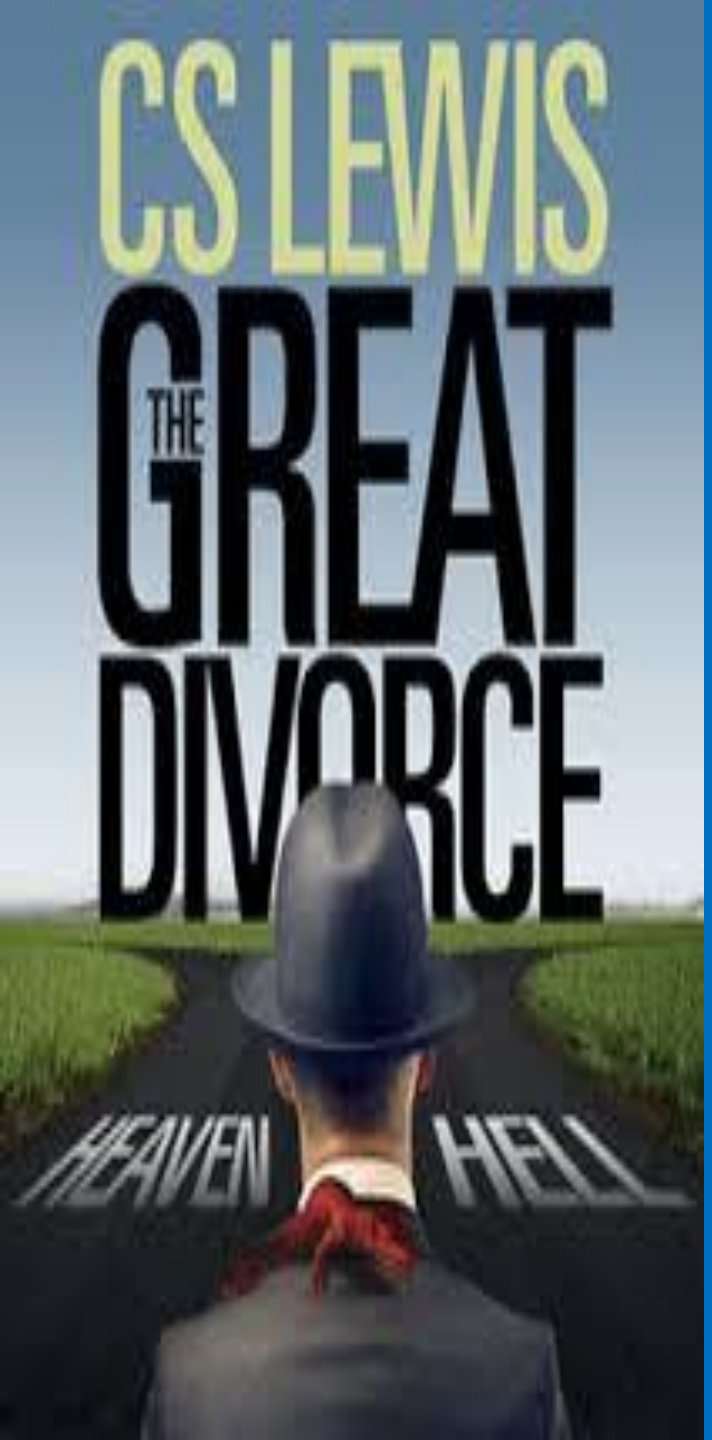
Discussion Questions:

7. Regarding those who reject eternal life with God, MacDonald says, “the choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words ‘Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.’” According to John 3:19-21, why do people ultimately reject God? How can you determine whether a person’s intellectual objections are genuine or just a smokescreen to hide the fact that they love their sin?



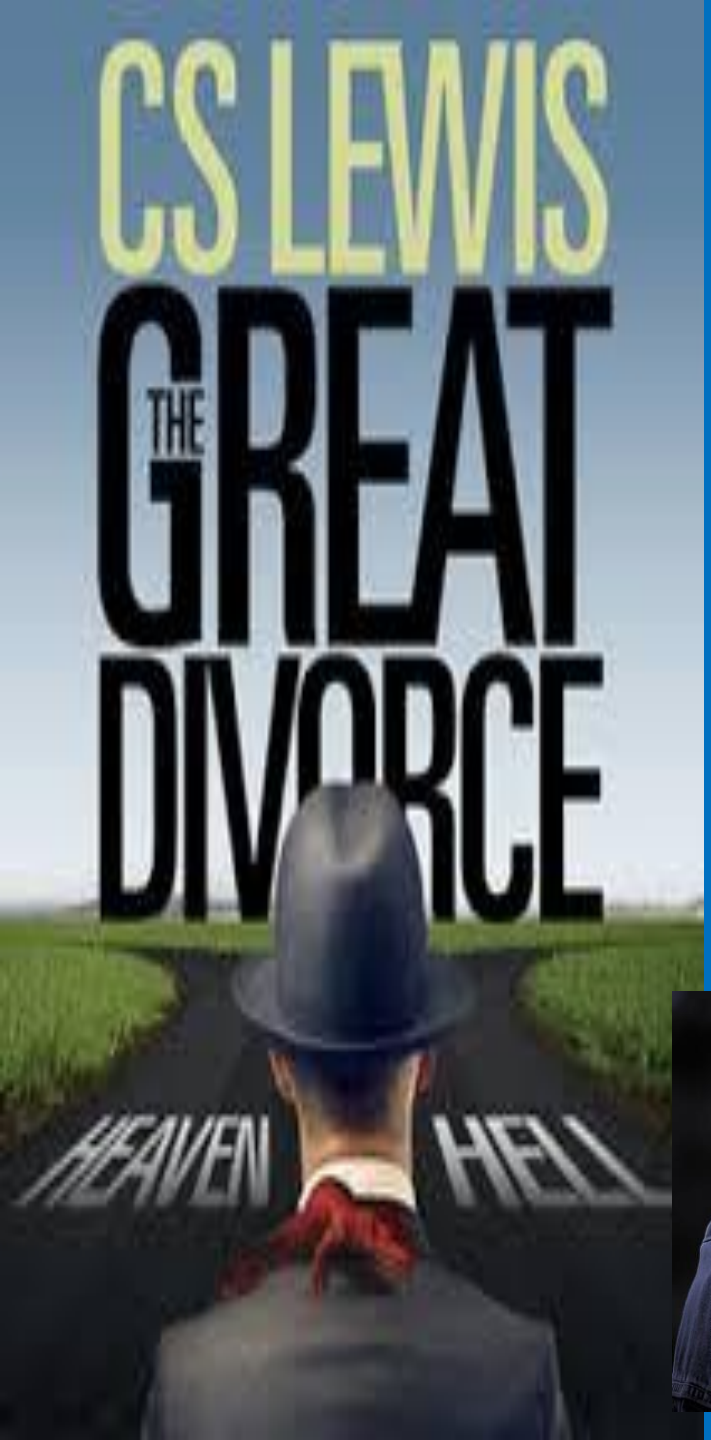
Discussion Questions:





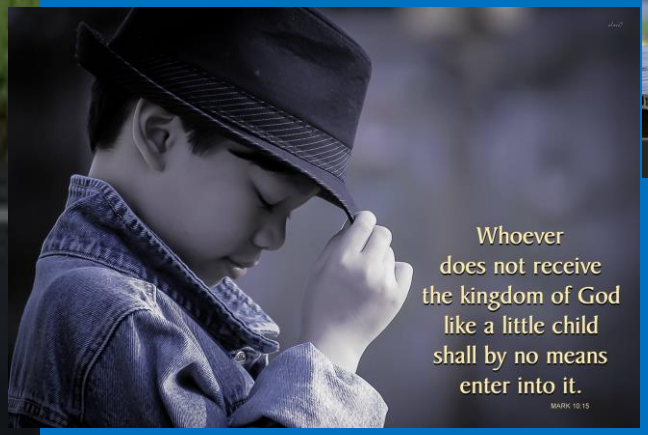
Discussion Questions:

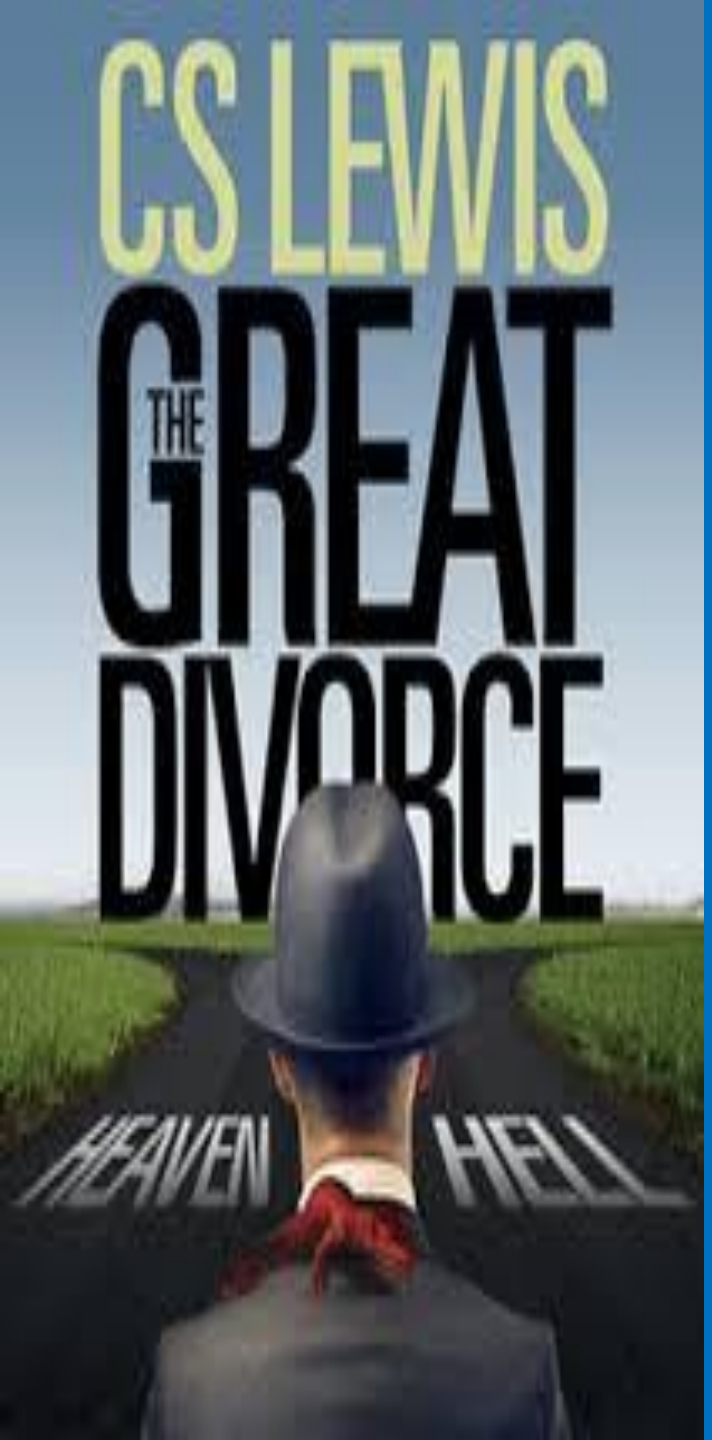
8. MacDonald gives another example of a scientist whose research consumed his life and who eventually died and made it to the “Valley of the Shadow of Life”. He did not continue on to the mountains because there was nothing there to prove, no question he could provide an answer for. Had he been able to overcome this disappointment, he could have begun again as “a little child and entered into joy.”



Discussion Questions:

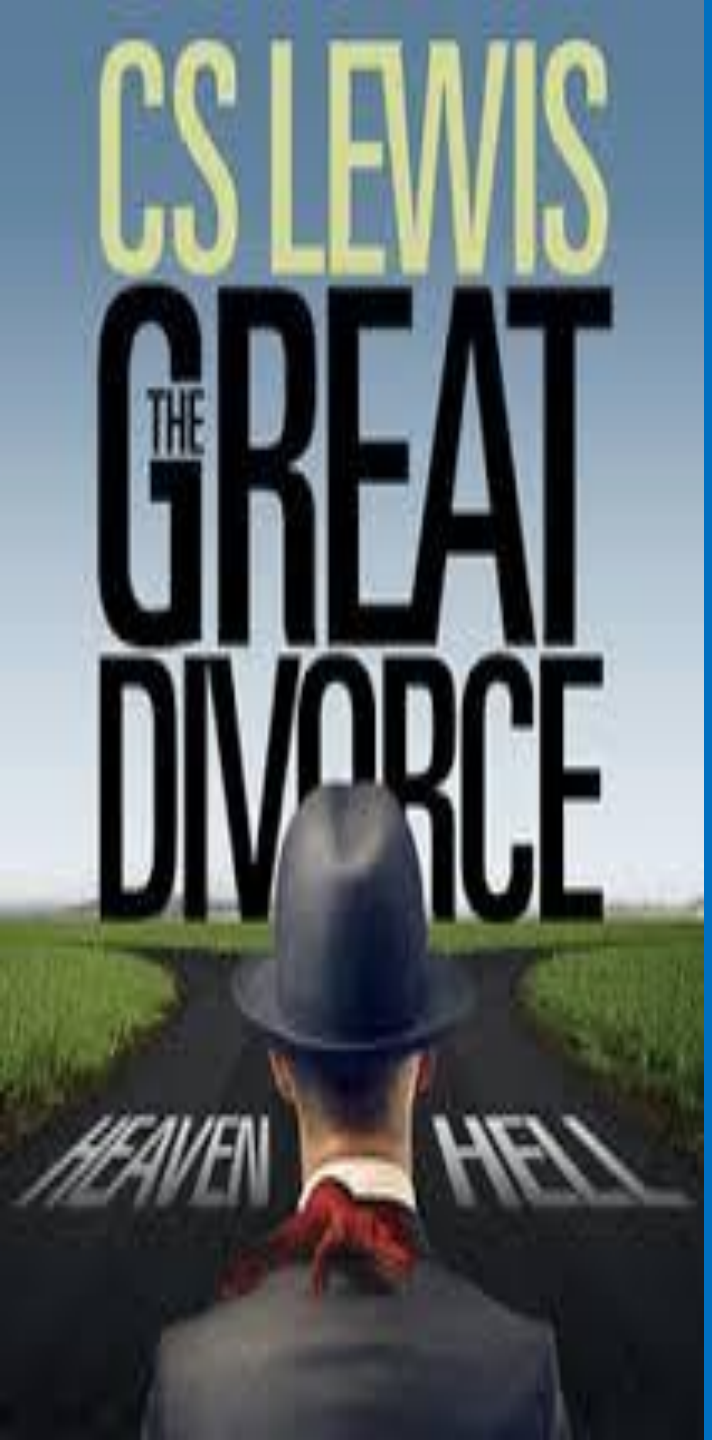
8. Jesus reinforces this idea in Matthew 18:13 and Mark 10:15. Why are little children the perfect model for how we are to come to Christ?





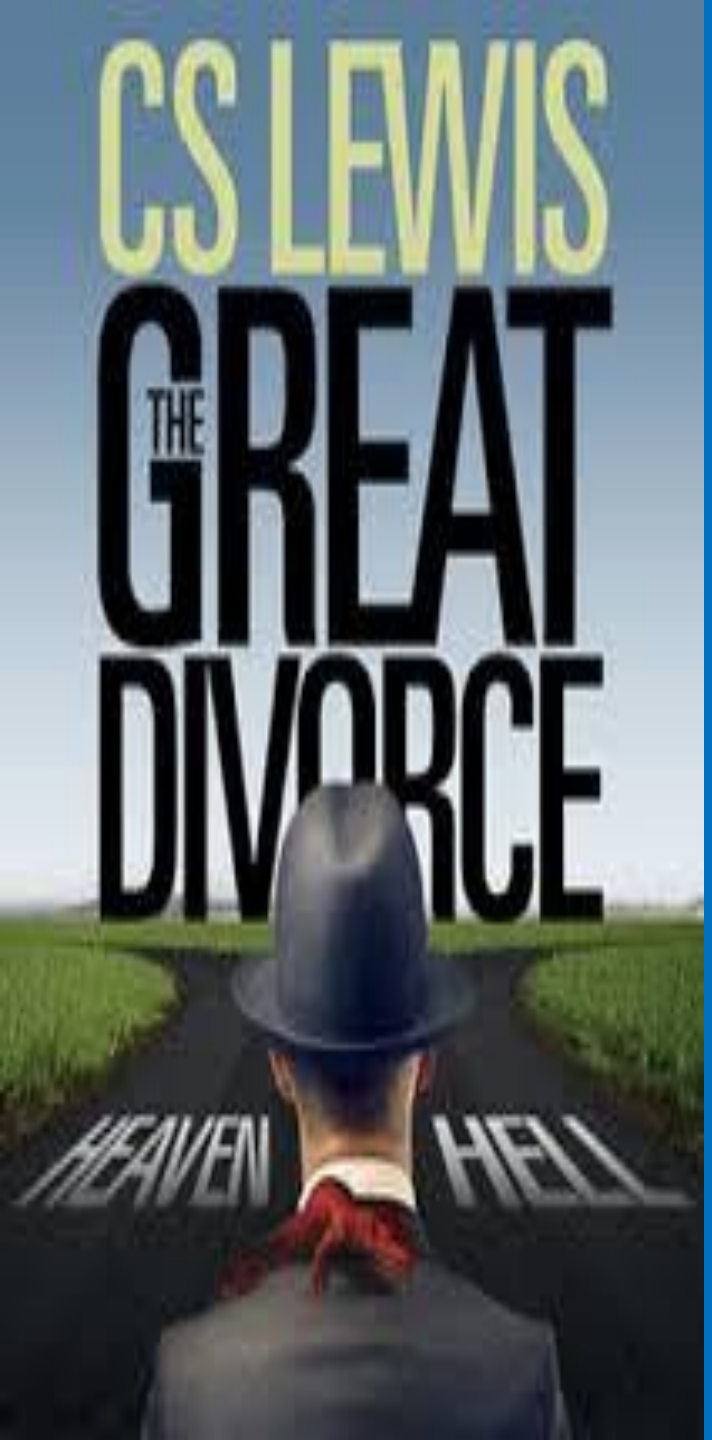
Discussion Questions:

9. Recalling his conversation with the Hard-Bitten Ghost, what is MacDonald's answer to Lewis' question as to why the solid people, since they are full of love, don't venture to Hell to rescue the Ghosts.



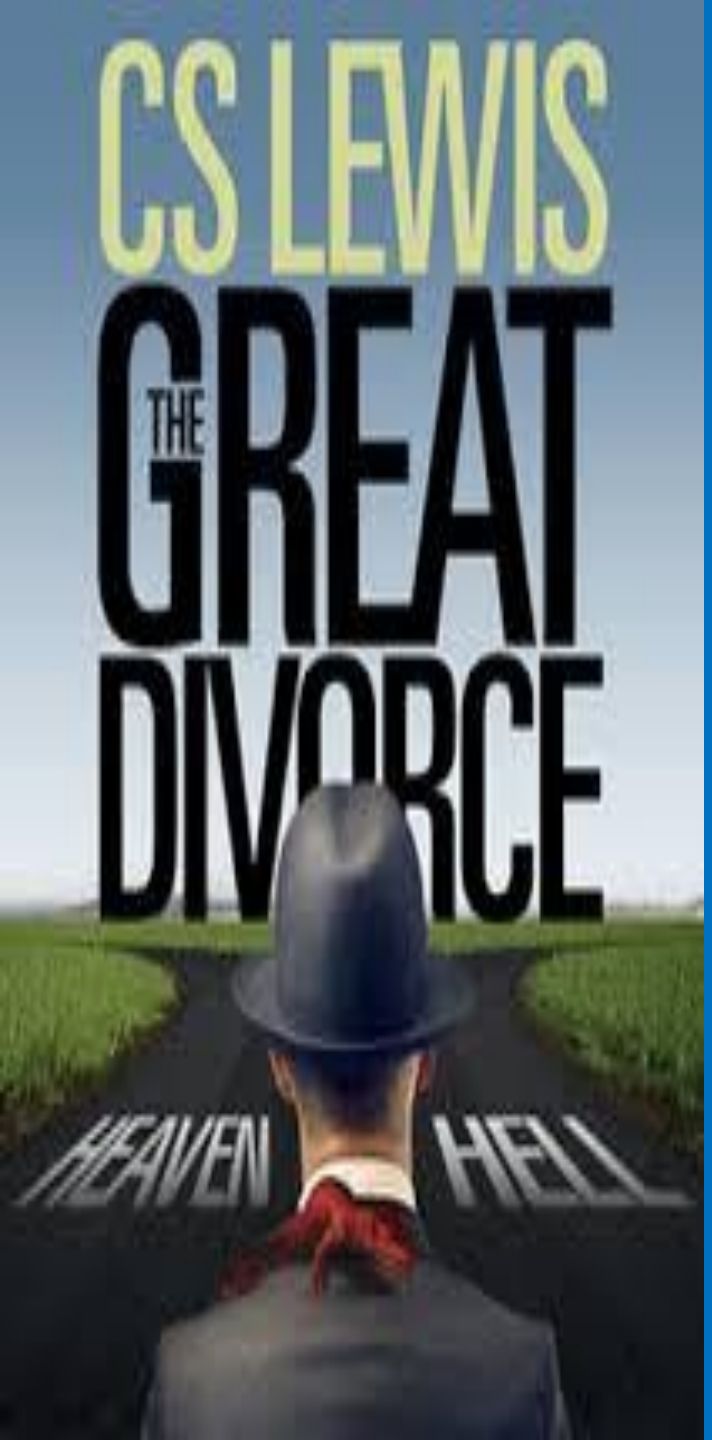
Discussion Questions:

10. Lewis' next concern is for all the poor Ghosts who never make it to the bus stop. MacDonald responds by defining two types of people. Who are they?



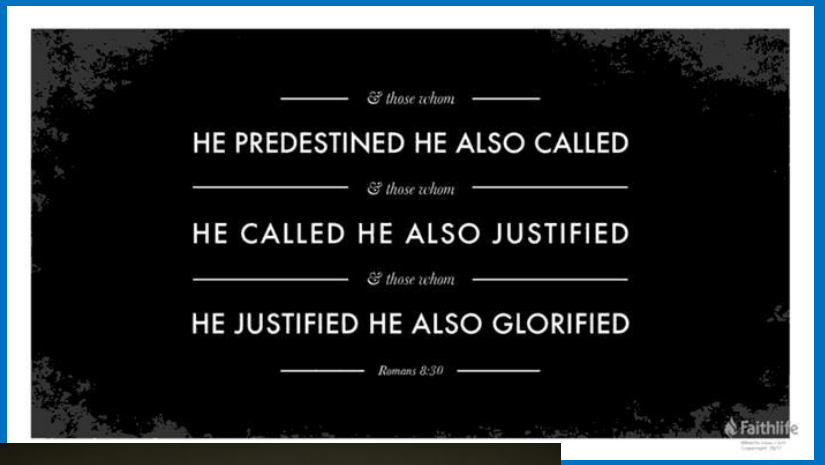
Discussion Questions:

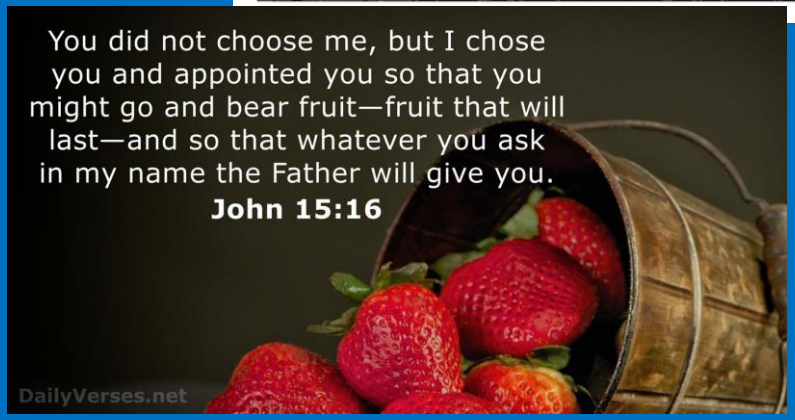
11. MacDonald provides further clarification on the Ghosts who do not make it to the bus stop when he says, “All that are in Hell, choose it.” Do you believe that those who end up in Hell actually choose it over Heaven? Using the following verses, summarize how man’s free will and God’s sovereignty work together in salvation.

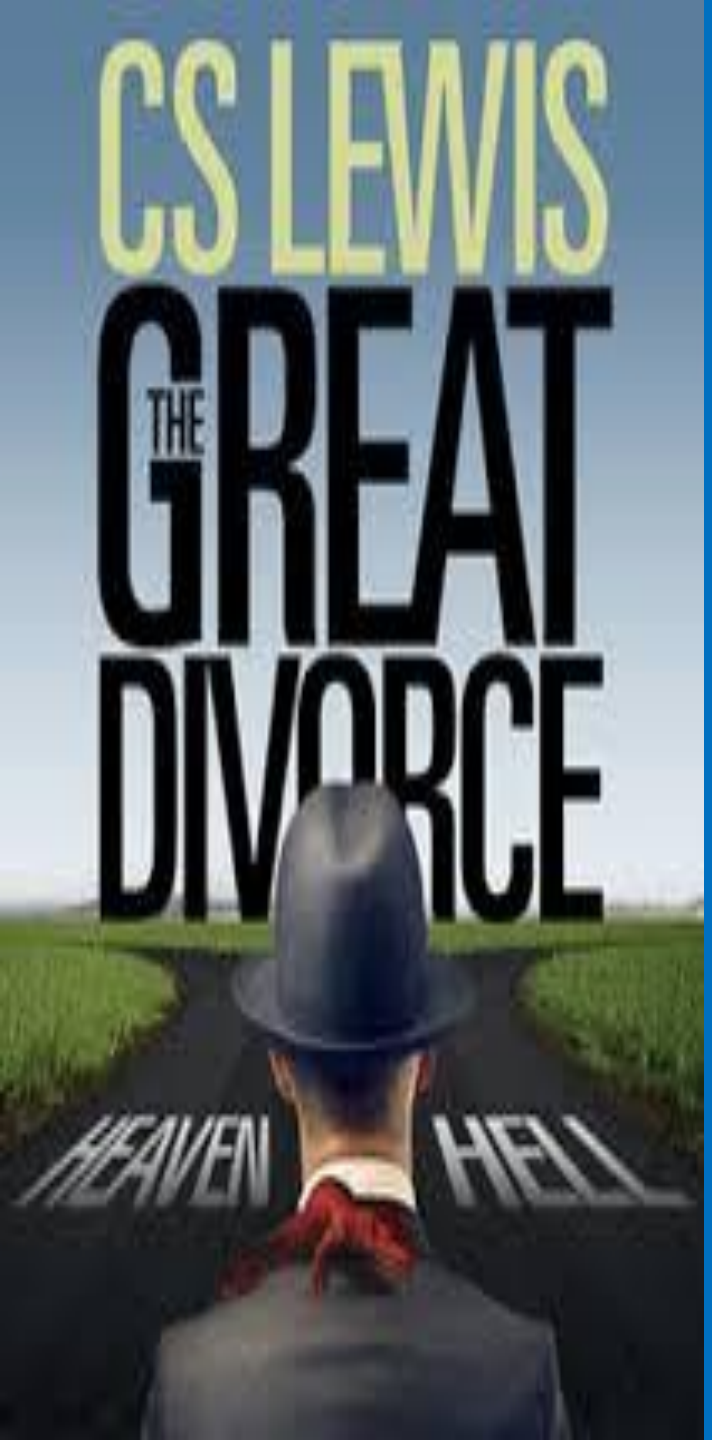


Discussion Questions:

11. Who determines who is saved?





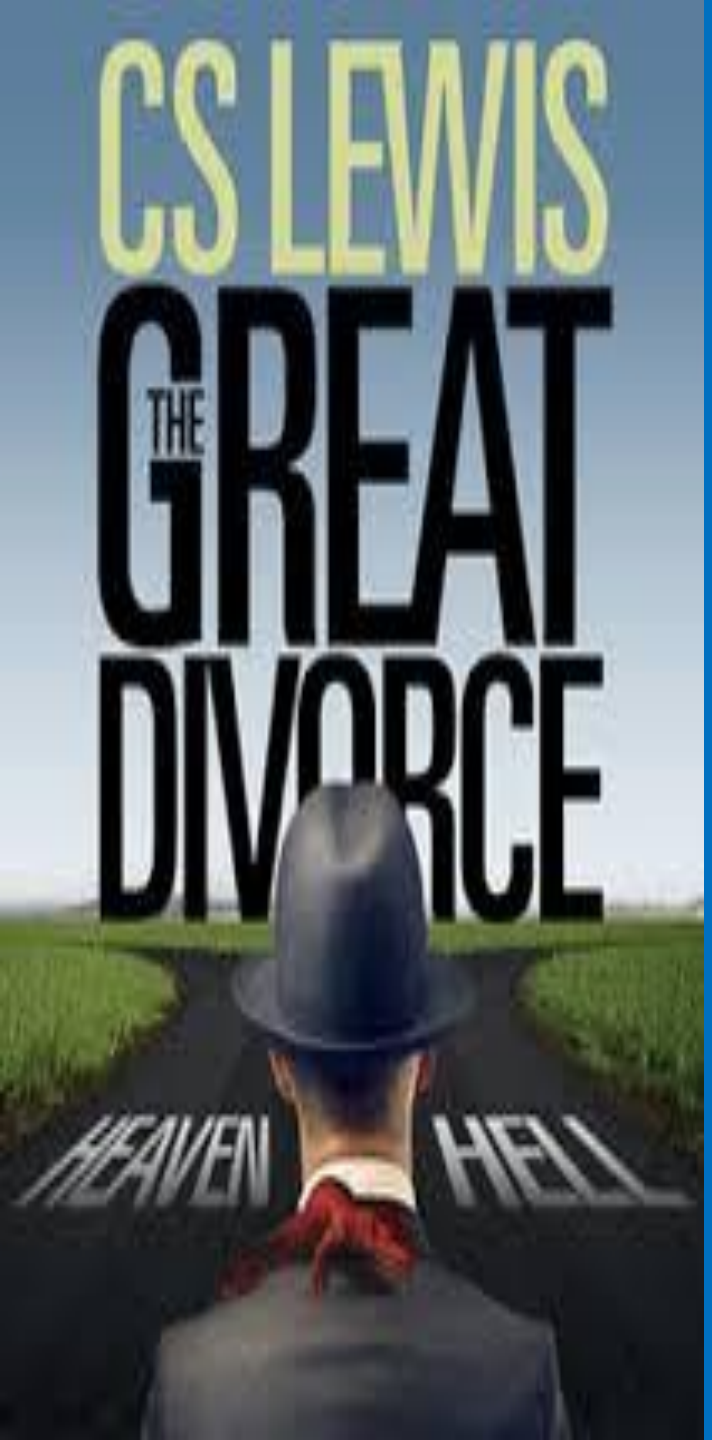


Discussion Questions:

11. Who takes the first step in salvation?

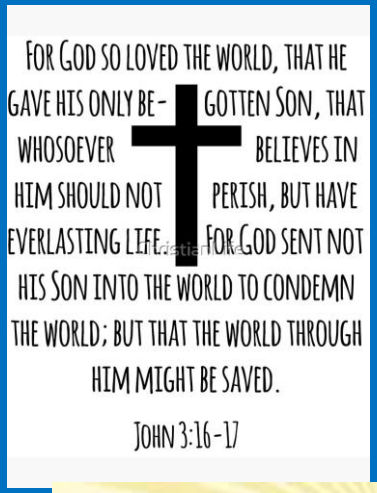
Romans 5:16-17

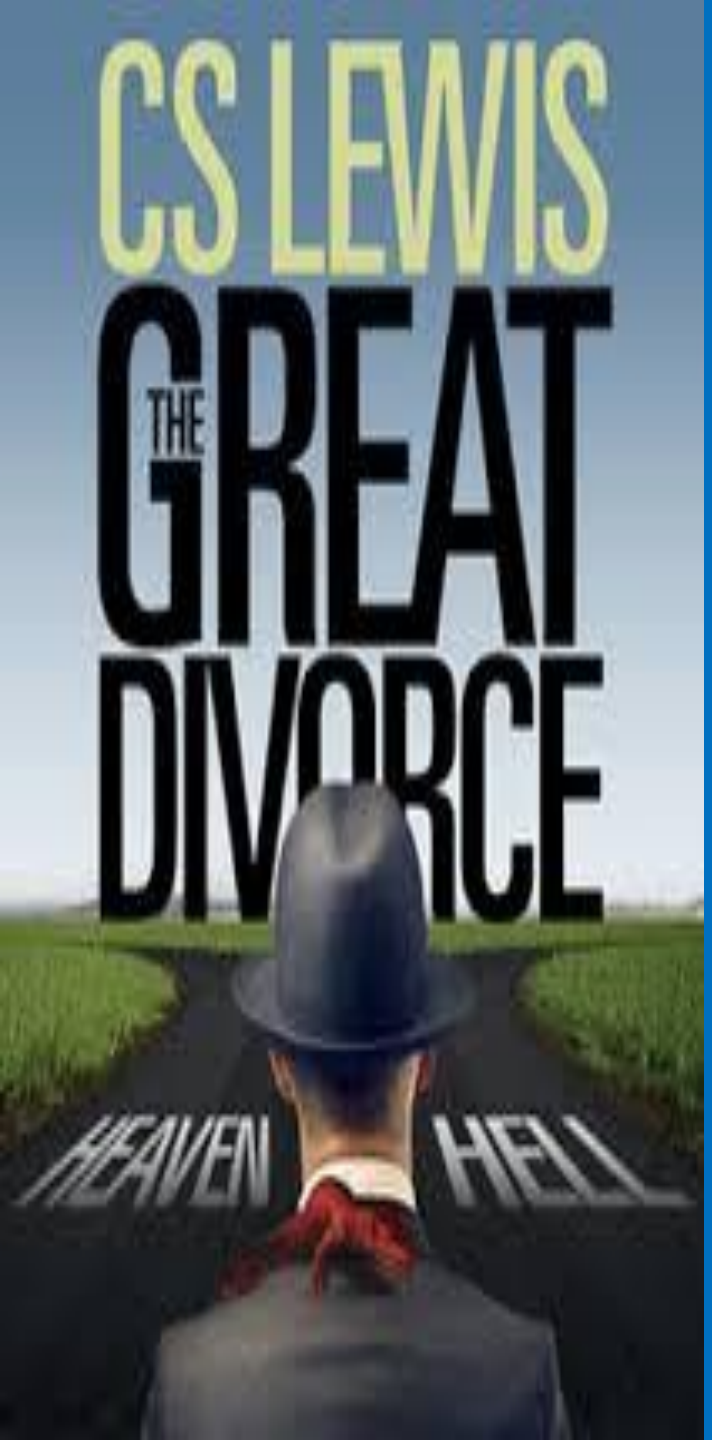
And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.



Discussion Questions:

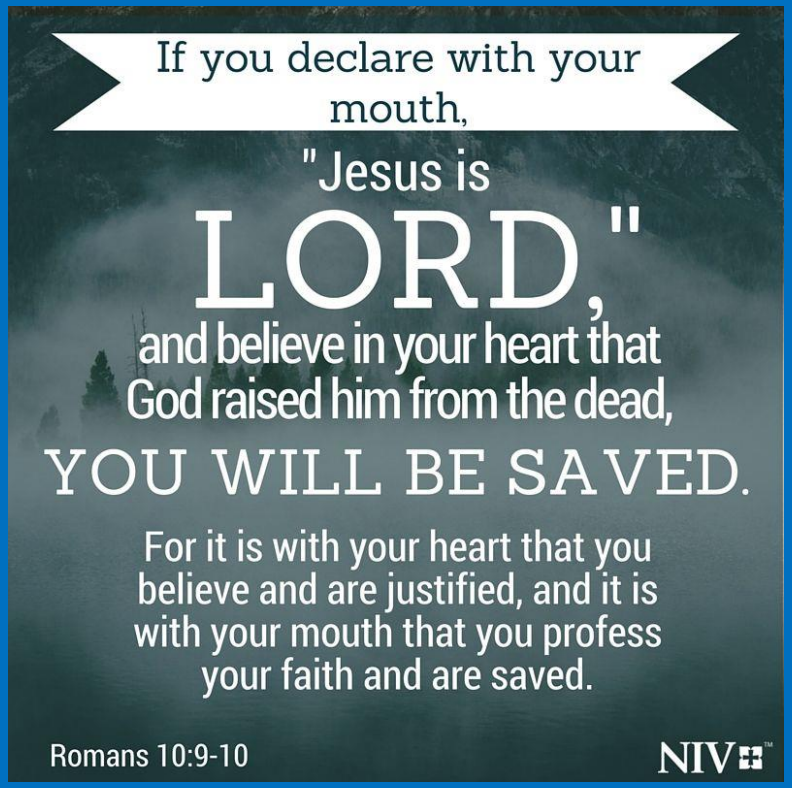
11. Who is salvation made available to?

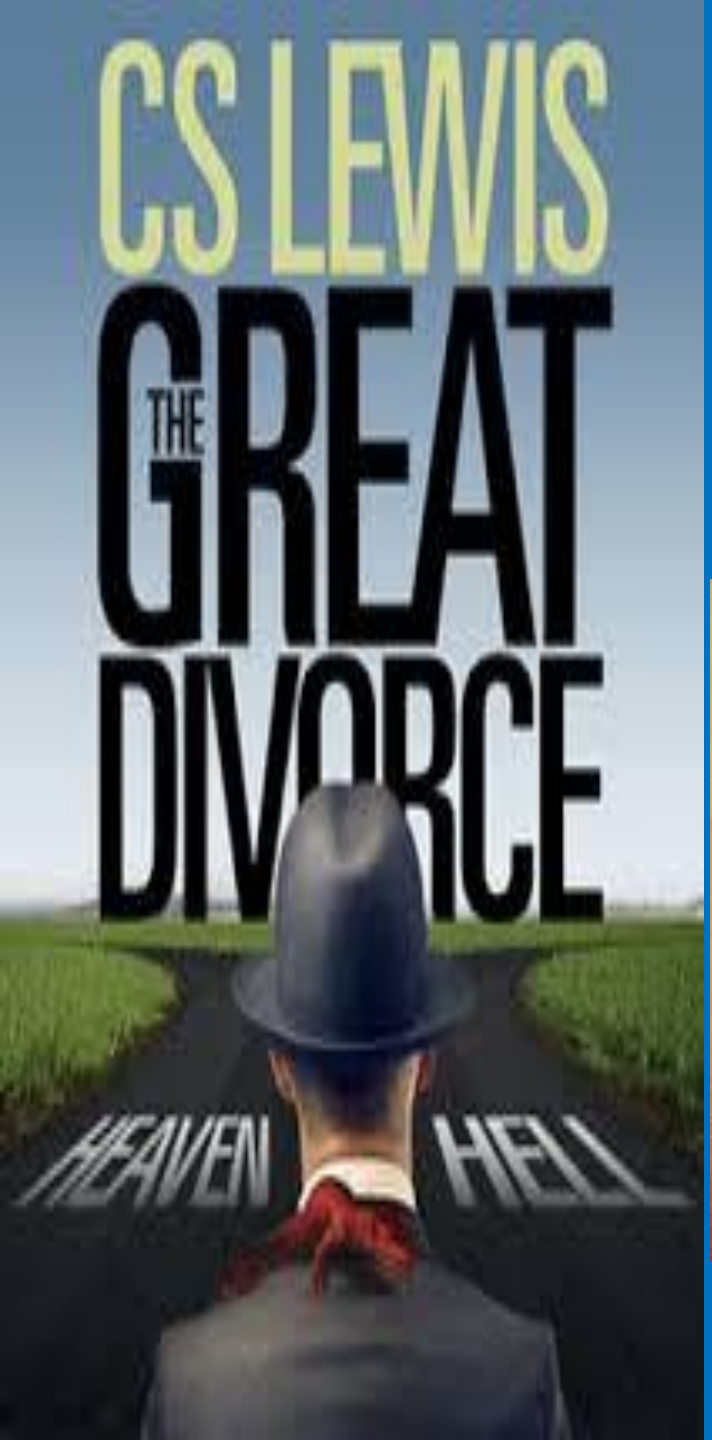




Discussion Questions:

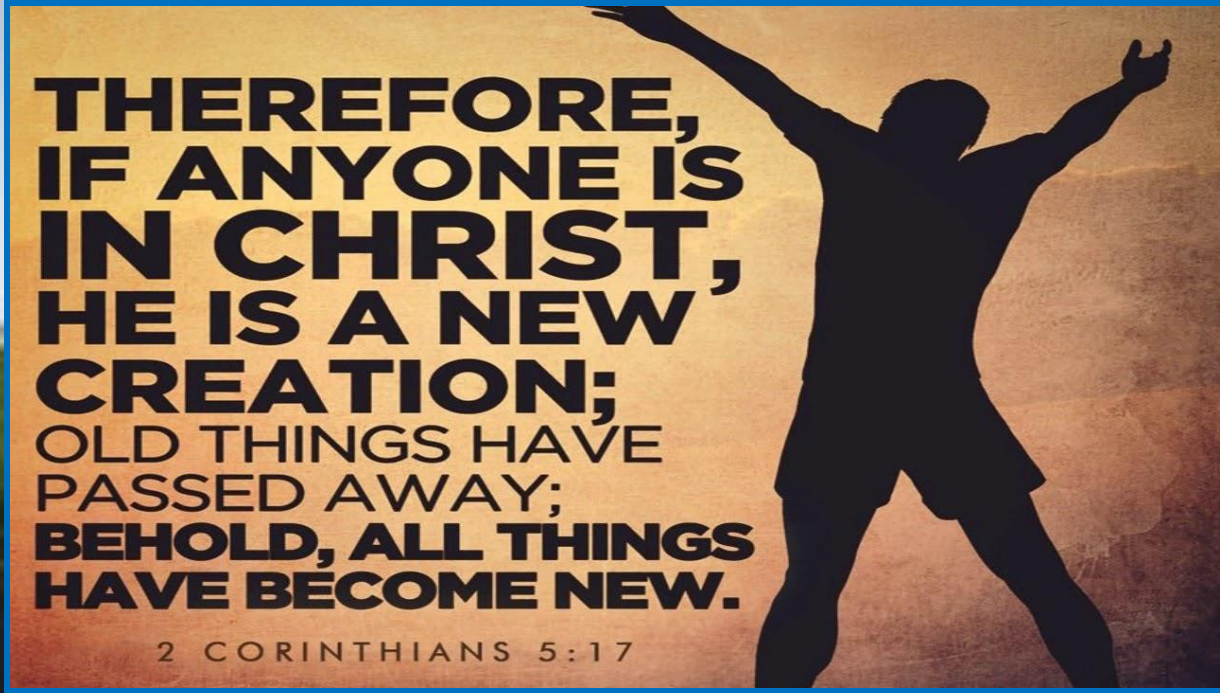
11. What must man do to be saved?

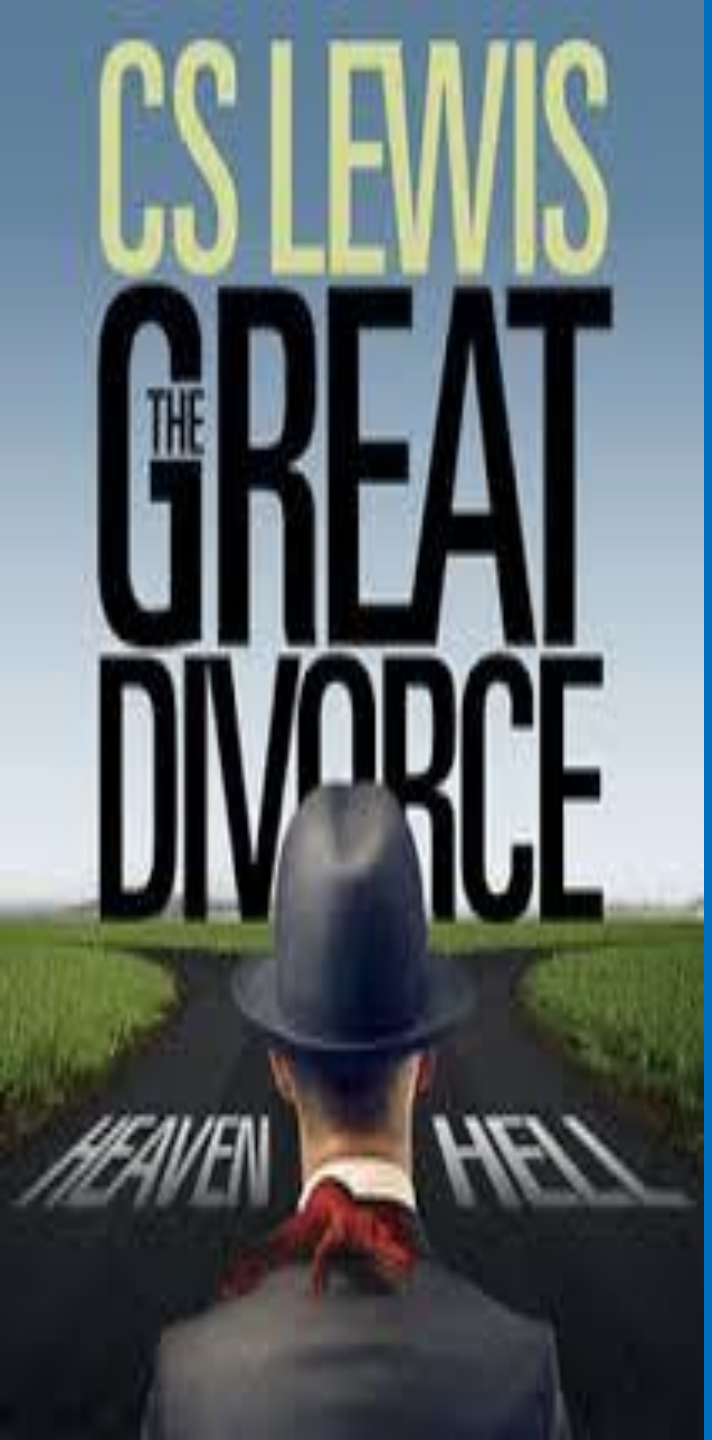




Discussion Questions:

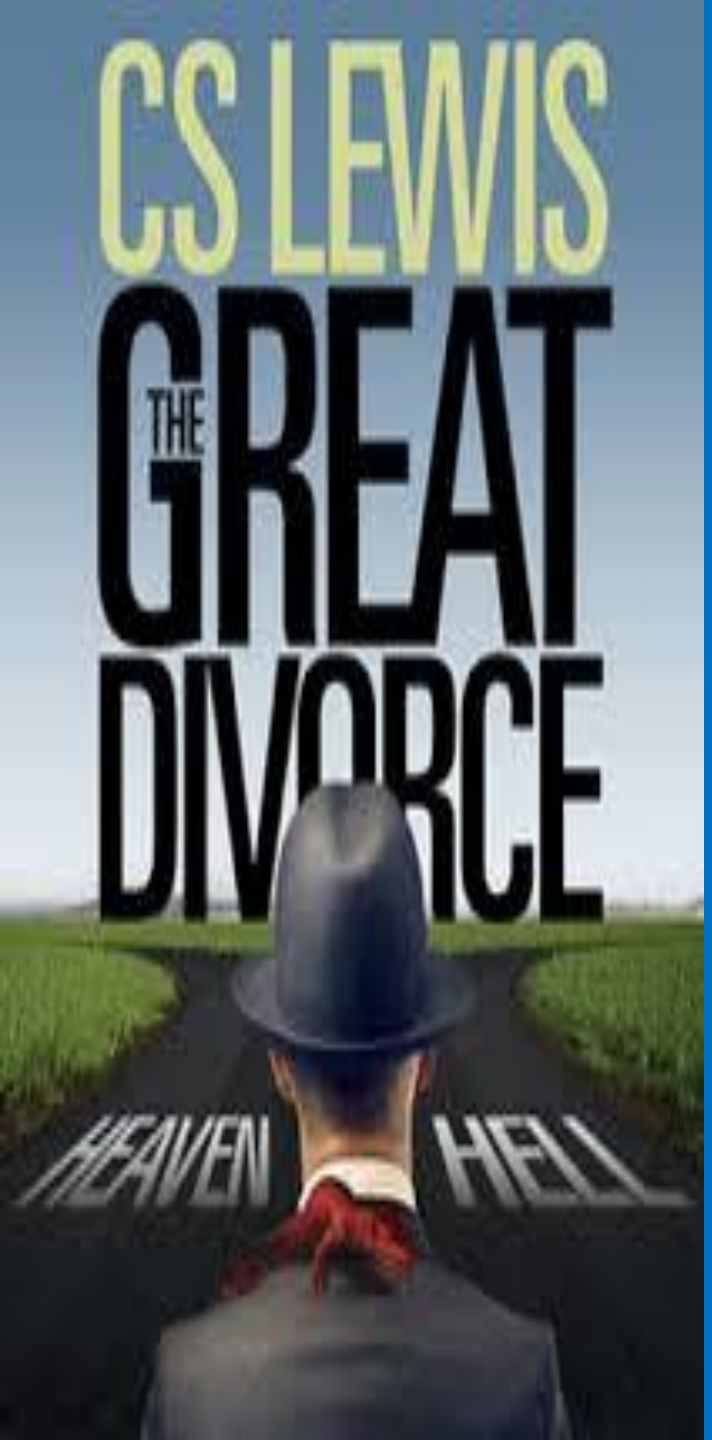
11. What is the result of our salvation?





Discussion Questions:

12. What is Lewis' concern about the Grumbling Ghost? What was MacDonald's response to his concerns and the dangers of grumbling? Do you think MacDonald is too severe in his judgment of grumbling?



Discussion Questions:

13. Describe the other types of Ghosts that come near to Heaven but do not stay.

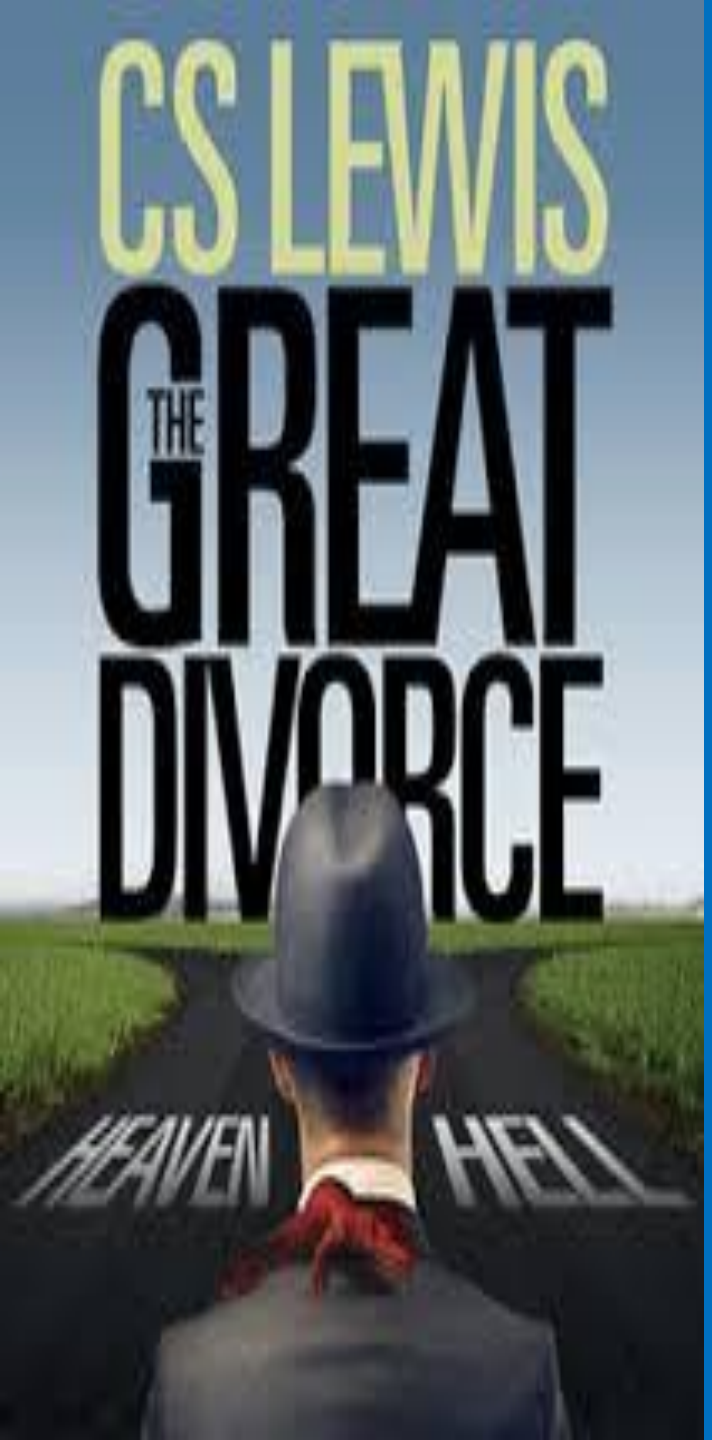
A – The Teaching Ghost –

B – The Tub-Thumping Ghost –

C – Planning Ghosts –

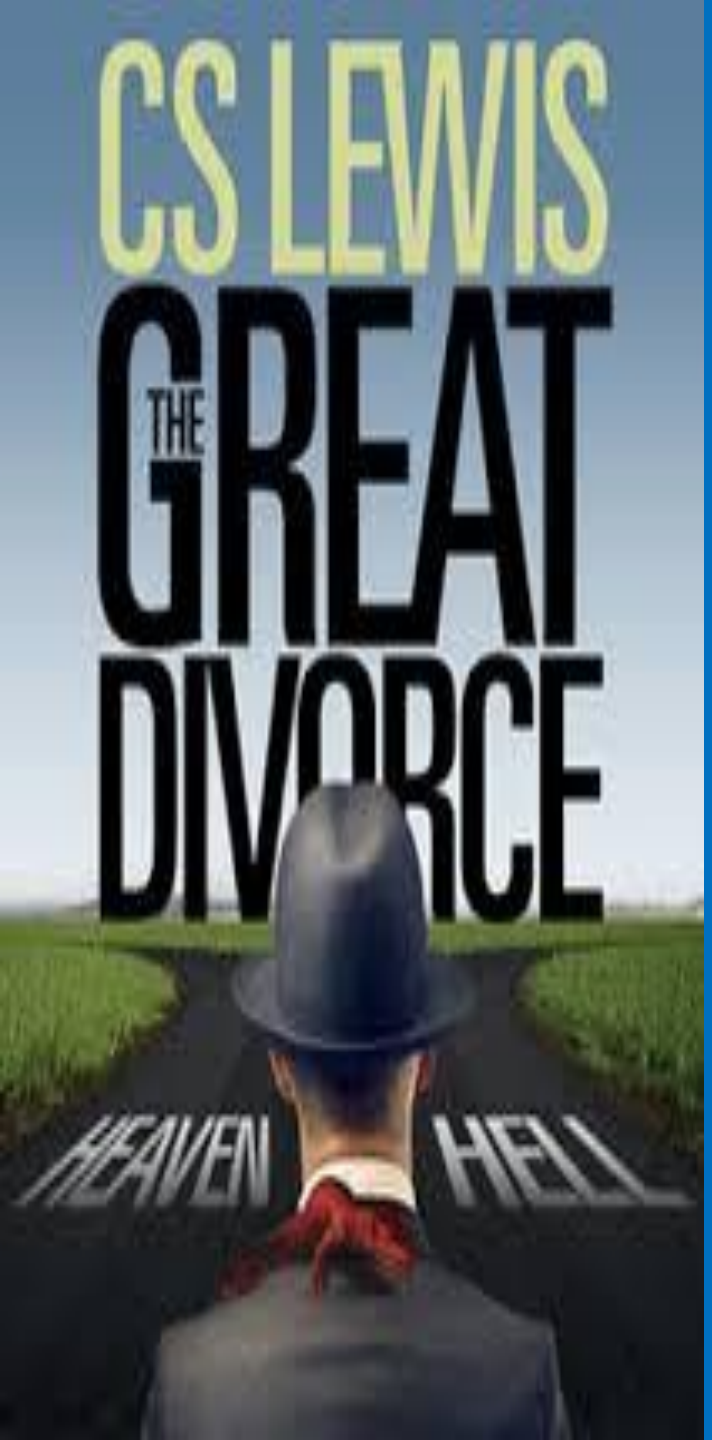
D – Materialist Ghosts –

E – Bogie Ghosts -



Discussion Questions:

14. Regarding these Ghosts who appear to be vile and unredeemable, Lewis wonders why they are even here to begin with. What is MacDonald's response? Do you think there is some truth in his explanation? Why or why not?

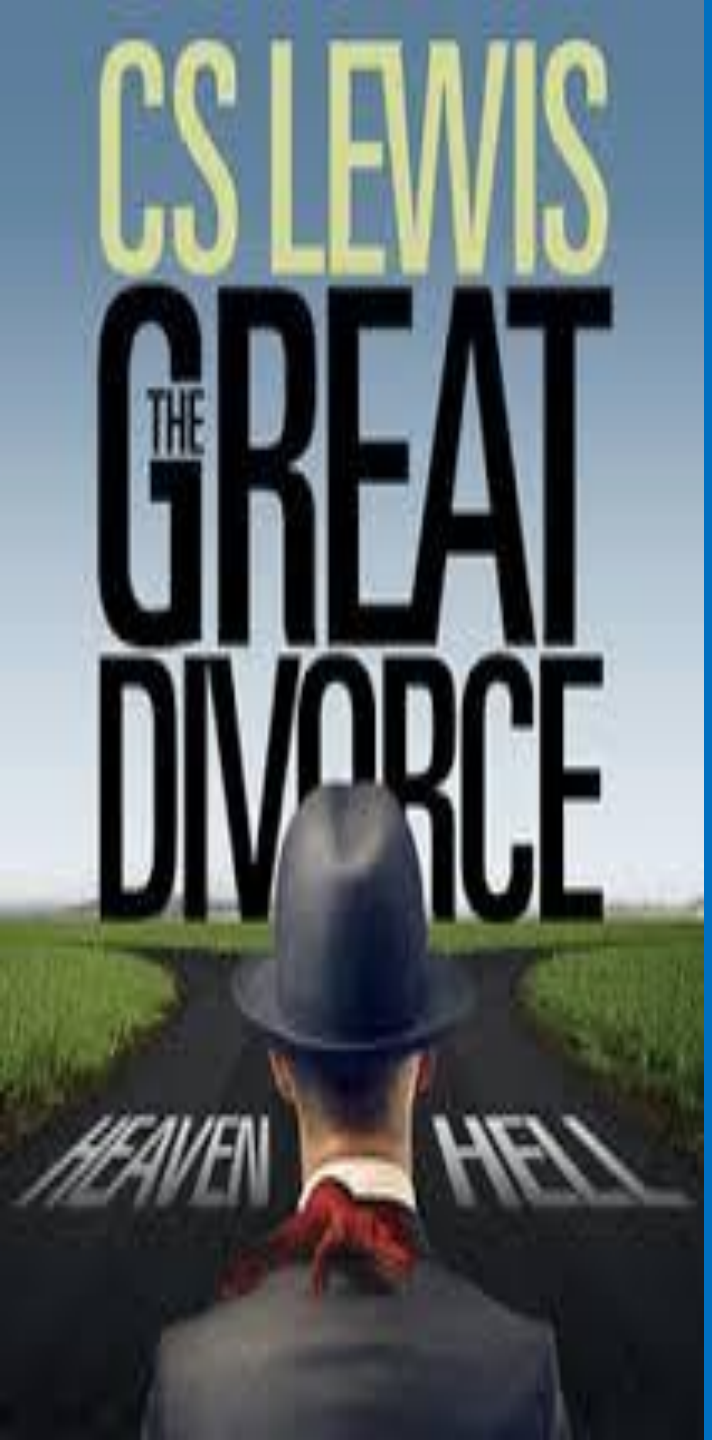


Discussion Questions:

15. The Artist Ghost was quite famous on Earth and had begun painting as a means to tell about the light. Over time, he lost that desire and just painted for painting's sake. What does Rev. 2:4-5 tell us about rekindling that passion we had for Jesus when we first became Christians?

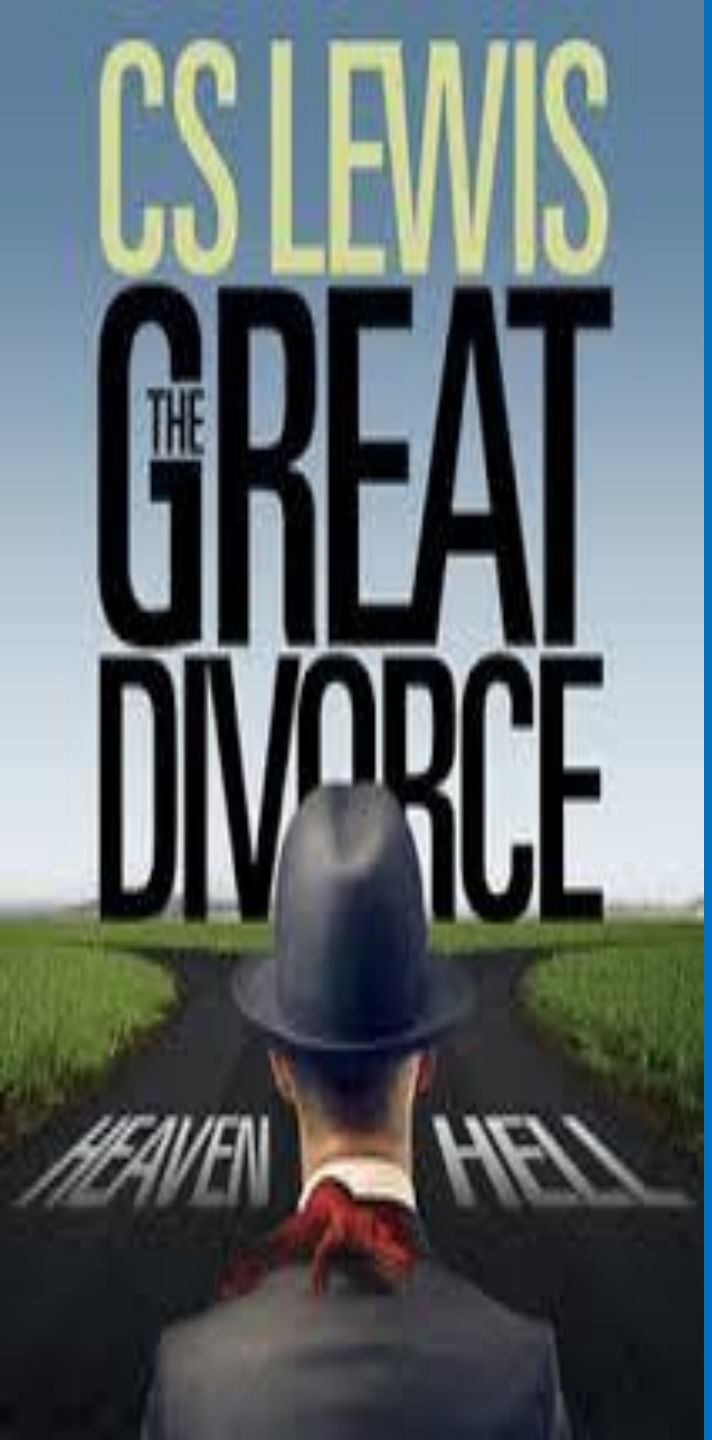
Revelation 2:4-5

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.

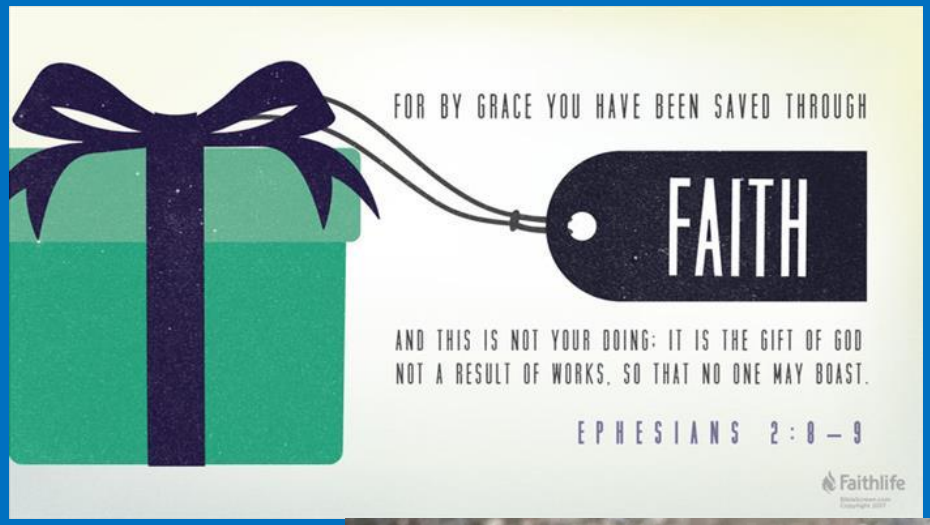


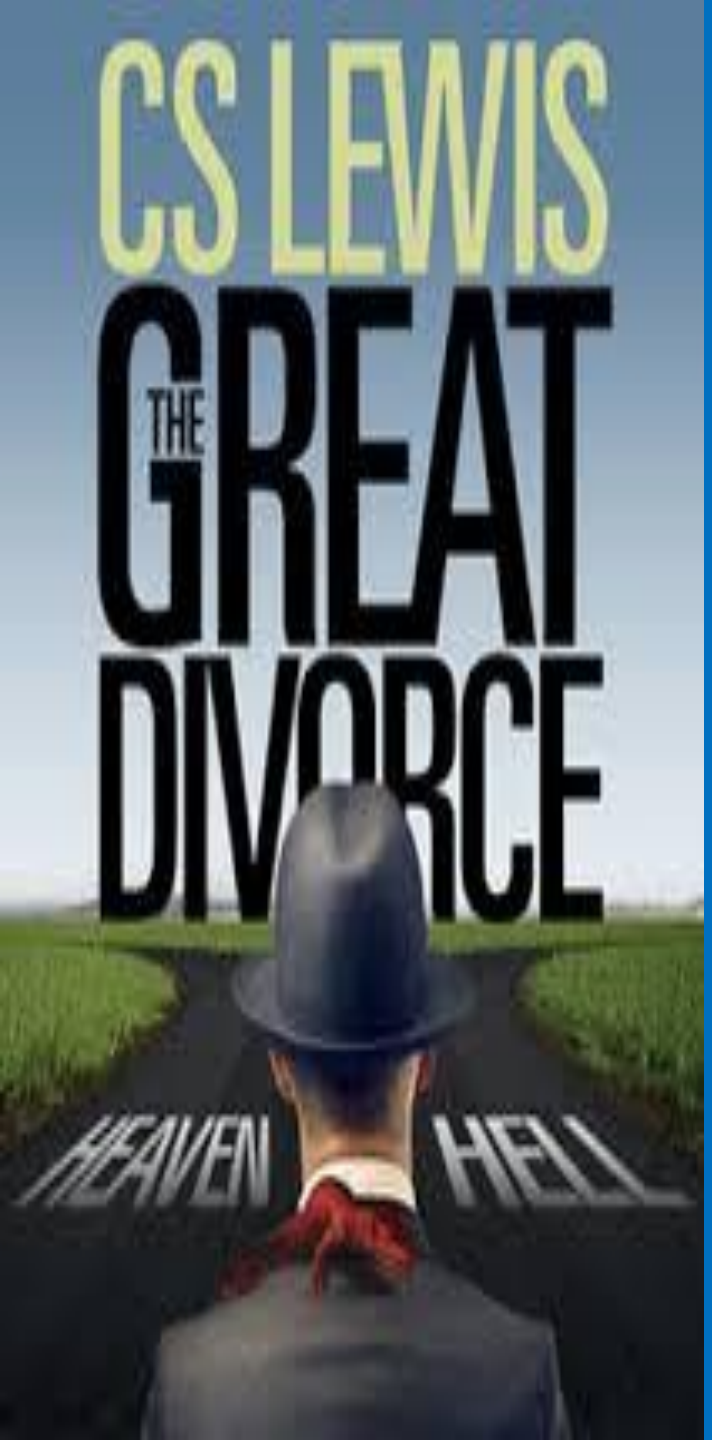
Discussion Questions:

16. From this conversation, we learn that if Ghosts continue on their destination into Heaven, they will encounter a fountain. What is the result of their drinking from this fountain? Accord to Eph. 2:8-9 and Isaiah 64:6, what should be our approach to the works we accomplish here on Earth?



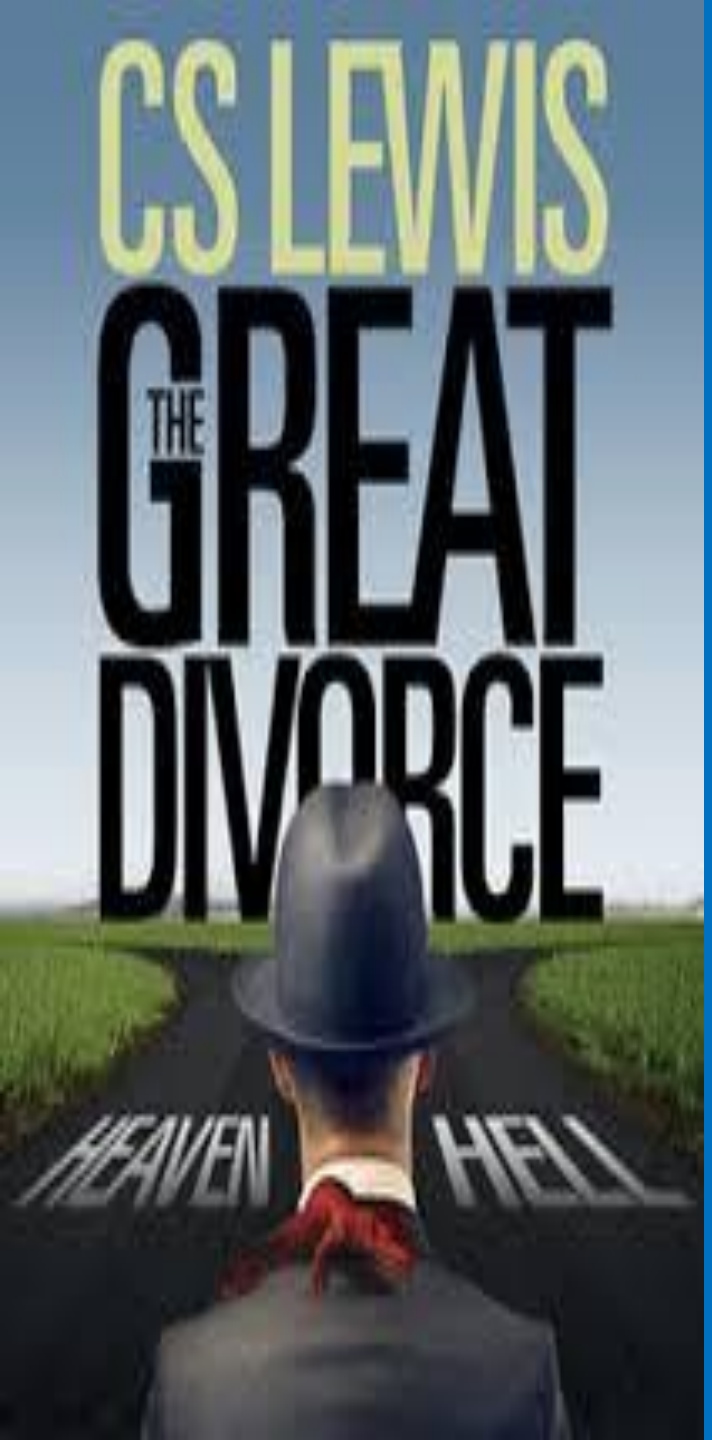
Discussion Questions:





Discussion Questions:

17. The Ghost, with little enthusiasm, begins his walk with the Spirit, believing tht at least there will be interesting people to meet in Heaven and that his life's works will be enjoyed in posterity by those on Earth. What contradictory information does he learn that causes him to abandon the trip to Heaven?



Homework:

Chapters 9