

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?

1. John 14:1-6: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me (Jesus). In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am going (Heaven).”*

Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’

Jesus answered, ‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’.”

A. So, if you can’t get to Heaven except through Jesus (as a Christian), then what happened to all the Old Testament dead?

2. II Kings 2:1-12 says Elijah rode a fiery chariot into heaven, yet Jesus said in **John 3:13** *“No one has ever gone into Heaven except the one who came from Heaven - the Son of Man.”*

So, where did Elijah go? Are there more than one heaven?

3. Ephesians 4:10 says *“Jesus who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens.”* **The Bible refers to three different heavens:**

A. II Peter 3:7 says the present heavens are reserved for fire when the Lord returns.

B. Genesis 1:6-8 says the sky is the heavens.

C. Psalm 8:3 says the stars and planets are heavens.

4. These three heavens will all be destroyed when the Lord returns

A. II Peter 3:10: *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”*

B. Revelation 21:1: *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...”*

C. But, the third Heaven is where God dwells, and where Jesus has prepared a place for Christians.

(1) In II Corinthians 12:2,3, Paul called this “third Heaven:” “Paradise.”

5. So, what happened to the dead before Jesus died for us, and prepared a place for us? Jesus told us in Luke 16:19-26:

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat

what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell (Hades), where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity 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 fire.'

But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

A. Angels will take everyone to Heaven according to **Matthew 24:31**: "And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call (at the End), and they will gather His elect (Christians) from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

An angel's job is to take care of Christians from the time they are born according to **Matthew 18:10**: "...For I tell you that their (children) angels in Heaven always see the face of My (Jesus) Father in Heaven;" **through their life on this earth**, according to **Hebrews 1:14**: "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Christians)?" **Until they take us to Heaven**, according to **Luke 16:22**: "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side."

B. Lazarus went to a good place (v.22). Jesus called this place "**Paradise**" in **Luke 23:43**

C. The rich man was in Hell (v.23), and so was Lazarus and Abraham (v.23). Even Jesus went to Hell according to Acts 2:27-32...or did He?: "...because You (God) will not abandon Me (Jesus) to the grave (King James says "Hell," and New International says "grave;" but the original Greek says, "Hades.")...(31) Seeing what was ahead, He (King David in **Psalms 16:8-11**) spoke of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave (Hades), nor did His body see decay (when it was in the tomb for three days). God has raised this Jesus to life."

D. There are three words translated "Hell" in the Bible: Hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus (waiting place for wicked angels in **Jude 6,7**). **The word "hell" mentioned here in Luke 16:23, and also in Acts 2:27-32 is "Hades."** It is translated in the Greek as "the unseen abode of the dead," "death," or "the grave." **This is not the word "Hell" (Gehenna) which is the "Lake of Fire" where the wicked will be thrown forever at the Judgment (Revelation 20:10-15).**

E. As Jesus describes in this story, Hades (Hell) was where all the dead went before Jesus died on the cross to pay for their sins as the sacrifice which enables us to go to Heaven. Hades was divided into two sides (a good side and a bad side), divided by a chasm which didn't allow those on the bad side to get to the good side. On one side the wicked were "in agony in this fire." And, on the other side the good were "comforted."

6. So, how did things change after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, becoming our perfect sacrifice for our sins, and allowing us to go to Heaven?

I Peter 3:18: “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison (or, “Hades,” according to Jesus’ story in ***Luke 16:19-26***) who disobeyed long ago...”

A. Peter is referring to the time (3 days) Jesus was in the *grave (Hades)*, as ***Acts 2:27-31*** also speaks of. **Which side of Hades (Hell) did Jesus go to?**

(1) In ***Luke 23:43***, He told the thief on the cross “*today you will be with me in Paradise*” (not the fire side of Hades).

B. But, why did Jesus “*preach(ed) to the spirits in prison (Hades) who disobeyed (vs.18-20)*”? Even those on the good side of Hades had “*disobeyed.*”

(1) ***Romans 3:23*** says “*for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Heaven).*”

(2) ***I Peter 4:6*** says “*For this reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead...*” The Old Testament people didn’t know Jesus had just died for their sins, and, as we have already read in ***John 14:6***, Jesus made it clear that the only way a person could get to Heaven was through Him.

7. So, after He preached the gospel (New Testament), then what?

Ephesians 4:8,9: “*This is why it says (in Psalm 68:18): ‘When He (Jesus) ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.’ What does ‘He ascended’ mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions (Hades)? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens.*”

A. When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended from Hades to earth to Heaven, He took those “*captives*” from Hades to Heaven with Him. Remember, ***I Peter 3:18-20*** refers to the good side of Hades as “*spirits in prison.*”

B. Remember in ***John 20:17***, when Christ rose from the dead (Sunday), He told Mary not to hold on to Him because He had not yet ascended to Heaven?

8. *John 5:24-29:* “*I (Jesus) tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man.*

*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves (Hades, according to Jesus’ story in ***Luke 16:19-26***) will hear His voice and come out — those who have*

done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

A. These words were spoken before Jesus died. After His death, He announced it to the dead in *Hades*, and then took the good side (*Paradise*) to Heaven. This is why, as we have already read in *II Corinthians 12:2-4*, Paul saying he saw *Paradise* in the *third Heaven*.

B. In *Luke 20:37,38* Jesus said, “*Even Moses showed that the dead rise...He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.*” Jesus said even the Old Testament dead were “*the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:36).*”

C. So, when do the dead rise? When they die!

9. James 2:26 says the body is dead only when the spirit is apart from it.

10. II Corinthians 5:8 says to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

11. Philippians 1:21-23 says this is why Paul desired to depart from the body, so he could be at home with the Lord (in Heaven): “*For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*”

12. Acts 7:54-60 tells of the death of the first Christian (Stephen): “*When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him (Stephen). But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see Heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’*

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul (later to be the Apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament).

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he has said this, he fell asleep.”

A. Before Stephen died, Heaven was opened to him and he could see in.

B. Stephen’s spirit left his body and went Home to be with the Lord as soon as his body died (v.59,60). Jesus told the thief on the cross the same thing (“*today, you will be with me in Paradise*” - *Luke 23:43*).

C. Death was a “sleep” (v.60).

13. I Corinthians 15:35-58: “But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come? How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as He has determined, and to each kind of seed He gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

(42)*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being;’ the last Adam (Christ), a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from Heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from Heaven, so also are those who are of Heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from Heaven.

*I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Listen, I tell you a mystery: **We will not all sleep (die), but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up into victory’.*”

A. Remember, when you read **v.42**: “*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.*” Jesus said they rise when they die (**Luke 20:37,38**). And, so does this Scripture: “*How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come*” (**v.35**).

B. When you get to **v.51**, where it says “*we will all be changed...at the Last Trumpet...*” It is only speaking of those who are still alive when the Lord returns, not those who have already died (slept). Just as Jesus told the thief who died with Him on the cross in **Luke 23:43**: “*today (when you die) you will be with me in Paradise.*”

14. I Thessalonians 4:13-18: “*Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. (14) We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. (15) According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the **dead in Christ will rise first** (before anyone who is still alive at Jesus’ coming — because they would have risen the instant they died), (17) After that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*”

A. Verses 13,14 talk about **those who die before Jesus comes back**, and **Verses 15-17** talks about **those who are still alive on earth when Jesus comes back**. Paul is simply saying that anyone who does not die, but is left on earth when Jesus comes back, will not get to Heaven before those who die. **If someone dies a second before the Lord comes, don't look for them to re-enter their body and stand up with you on earth... LOOK UP! (v.14).**

15. Hebrews 9:27,28: *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.”*

A. Jesus isn't coming back for those who have died (they are already with Him, and will come with him in the clouds when he comes back. He's coming back for those who are still alive and make it to the Last Day.

16. II Corinthians 4:6-5:11: *“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

It is written: ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken’ (Psalm 116:10). With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

(4:16)Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (17)For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (18)So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5:5)Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please

Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.”

A. Our bodies were made to be temporary and die (**4:18**). As the body dies, the spirit inside grows stronger (**4:16,17**). When the body dies, the spirit is finally released and can be transformed into a heavenly body as we have already read in *I Corinthians 15:35-54*.

B. The Holy Spirit is a guarantee of the promise of a new body in Heaven (**5:5**).

17. We were placed in this body to be tested, to prove our faith genuine according to

I Peter 1:3-9: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in Heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **These have come so that your faith** — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — **may be proved genuine** and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

A. According to James 1:12, we must all first pass this test of our faith here on earth before we can go on to Heaven: “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.”

18. According to II Peter 3:3-14, Jesus has delayed His coming to give us time to repent:

“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this coming He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. **He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him.”

19. But, remember, Jesus will come when you least expect Him according to

Matthew 24:36-44: “No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen to until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. **So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.”***

20. ARE YOU READY? *II Timothy 4:6-8:* “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”**