

What Happens To Us When We Die?

By David R Hughes

In this world there are many different beliefs about what happens to us when we die. Hindus and Muslims believe that the soul doesn't die but it transmigrates to another human body or an animal. Even within Christianity there are several different beliefs concerning the afterlife. Most Christian protestants believe that when the physical body dies, a separate eternal soul doesn't die but goes directly to heaven, a paradise of eternal bliss or to hell, a place of eternal fiery torment. In addition to that, Catholics also believe in a place called purgatory, a waiting place after death of the body, between heaven and hell where some people go before they are brought into heaven or condemned to hell. Purgatory is based on [Luke 16:19-31](#) where Jesus tells the parable of a rich man and a poor beggar, Lazarus after they both died, and also on [Isaiah 14:9](#) where Isaiah speaks of the realm of the dead. Some Christians believe that when we die, we remain in the grave or heart of the earth as Jesus described it, in a state of unconsciousness without any thought or awareness, like a dreamless sleep. Then if we died believing Jesus was truly the Christ and son of God, and had truly repented and turned away from all sins, embracing and loving all of the commandments of God, we will rest in Him and be awakened by the voice of Jesus Christ who will raise us up to be with Him at the First Resurrection when He returns at the end of the this age on the last day and when the seventh and last trumpet sounds as prophesied in the book of Revelation. The rest of the dead would be raised in subsequent resurrections after the millennial reign of Christ.

Those of us who believe the Holy Bible is true and the scriptures contain the truth inspired by God must look there to discern what is man-made doctrine and what is the truth of God the creator of all that exists. Using the principle of "here a little and there a little" I have compiled a list of scriptures that can help us to see and understand what God reveals about the mystery of what happens to us when we die.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years. According to this scripture true Christians will be living on earth assisting Christ in His Kingdom during the millennial restoration of the earth and not in the third heaven where the throne of God is.

John 3:13

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven." (other translations end with "who is of heaven", "who came down from heaven" or "whose home is in heaven".

This statement by Jesus was also true after His death and resurrection as Peter made clear at Pentecost in the book of Acts.

Acts 2:27 Peter quotes David in Psalm 16

"For you will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption."

This first part of this scripture is referring to David's belief in the resurrection, but the last part refers to Christ whose body did not remain in the grave long enough to decay and be corrupted.

Acts 2:29

"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day."

Peter was making the case that David was still dead, not resurrected, and the last part of Psalm 16 was not about David but was a prophecy about Christ's death and resurrection.

Acts 2:34

"For David did not ascend into the heavens."

David who God said is a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22) was not in Heaven at the time Peter was speaking about him according to Acts 2:34.

John 5:28-29

“For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (2 different resurrections)

When Christ returns all who have lived and died will be in the graves.

SOME SCRIPTURES REFERENCING HEAVEN THAT HAVE BEEN MISINTERPRETED

Philippians 1:23-24

“For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Paul states here that he will be with Christ at the trumpet of God (*the 7th trumpet of Revelation 11:15*) and then describes the time as at the first resurrection of the dead. At that resurrection all the dead who are truly in Christ will rise first and then the true Christians who are alive at Christ’s coming will rise to meet Christ in the air as He comes to set up His Kingdom on earth and take His throne.

Matthew 5:12

“Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”

This scripture is not saying you will go to heaven to receive your reward there according to Rev 22:12.

Revelation 22:12

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.”

This scripture clarifies Matthew 5:12 to mean the reward for your work which is now laid up in heaven for you will be brought with Christ to give to you at His return.

1 Peter 1:3-5 NKJV

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Here Peter states that an inheritance of eternal life in Christ is reserved (laid up) for us in heaven. And we are sustained here presently and until Jesus returns by God’s power through our faith in His salvation from death which will be revealed by the first resurrection of the saints (redeemed or justified by God) at the last day when Jesus returns and gives the reward of eternal life in Him.

2 Kings 2:11

“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.”

There are three heavens mentioned in the Bible. In Genesis 1:8 God called the firmament (the sky) Heaven. In Genesis 15:5 God told Abram to look toward heaven and count the stars if he was able to. So, space outside of earth’s atmosphere is a second heaven. In 2 Corinthians 12:2 Paul told of a man who was caught up into Paradise and referred to it as the third heaven. He couldn’t have gone to Paradise where the throne of God is because in John 3:13 Jesus said, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” Elijah was transported to another place on earth because years later when Elisha was the prophet, Elijah wrote a letter to Jehoram, king of Judah telling of God’s coming judgement on Judah because of their idolatry in 2 Chronicles 21:12.

Hebrews 11:5 NKJV

“By faith Enoch was taken away (from Greek word meaning to convey from one place to another or to transfer) so that he did not see death.”

Enoch was and is not in heaven because the writer of Hebrews 11:13 states that all the faithful who are mentioned earlier in chapter 11 which includes Enoch died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. Hebrews 11:39-40 states “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Speaking of all the faithful who had died without receiving the promise, the writer of Hebrews indicates that it is God’s will that they will be made perfect at the first resurrection at the same time all other true Christians who died in the faith and true Christians who are alive at Christ’s coming will be made perfect.

During the time before the flood evil was so rampant that God protected Enoch from being killed because he was righteous and “walked with God”. Enoch was Noah’s great-grandfather, so he died before the flood since he wasn’t on the Ark.

Also, in 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 Paul states “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those *who are Christ’s at His coming*”. Then in Corinthians 15:51-52 “Behold, I tell you a ^[a]mystery: We shall not all sleep, (die) but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”.