



# WHAT HAPPENS FROM DEATH TO NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

- ✓ What Happens When You Die?
- ✓ What are Deceased Christians Doing Now?

By Dr. Thomas Haney

HOPE LOOKS UP MINISTRIES

Discussing what happens when you die is a topic that many do not want to spend a great amount of time thinking or talking about. Yet, it is a subject most people must be fascinated with because of the number of questions that people ask related to this subject. The Bible says that most people live in lifelong bondage to the fear of death.

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# HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

## “WHAT HAPPENS FROM DEATH TO NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH?”

### INTRODUCTION – Fear Does Not Need to Control You

Welcome to Hope Looks Up Bible Study with Dr. Tom Haney. This session is the Third of Four mini-series in this study titled ‘Fear Does Not Need to Control You’. These are four areas that are causing our nation and even many believers to live in fear. First, we looked at: “The Continuing Pandemic”, Second: “Finances and Our Times.” and in this study we will look at: “What Happens from Death to the New Heaven and New Earth.” The fourth study area is titled “Three Great Prophecies of the Messiah, Dominate the End Times.” We will begin by looking specifically at what the Bible says, “Happens to us When we Die.” We will also answer the question “What are Deceased Christians Doing Now?”

### What Happens When You Die?

Discussing what happens when you die is a topic that many do not want to spend a great amount of time thinking or talking about. Yet, it is a subject most people must be fascinated with because of the number of questions that people ask related to this subject. I have written out almost all the Scriptures that I will refer to because I really feel the answers, we need are all in the Scriptures. The Bible says that most people live in lifelong bondage to the fear of death.

**Hebrews 2:14-15.** *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*

Most of the time this fear is suppressed, but it is always there, just below the surface. It normally surfaces when a friend or family member dies, when a person experiences a near-death event like a serious auto accident, or when a person begins to reach middle age. Of course, lying in a fox-hole, caught in a gun battle, or watching a disaster approach always gives rise to thoughts of death!

I think that is why the deaths of President Kennedy, Princess Diana, Martin Luther King Jr., John Lennon and a host of others had such great world-wide impact was because of their age. When people are relatively young, we tend to think they are invincible and will live forever. It is always sobering when we see the death of a younger person. It forces us to think about our own mortality, something that is not comfortable to do. But it never seems to last long, because we are always anxious to put the whole topic in the back of our minds. I can remember several crisis times in my lifetime that filled the Churches for a few weeks and even months but then everyone just went back to what they were doing before the crisis.

So, what happens when you die? I was not raised to believe in a personal God who worried about me. So, death, as I was taught was very impersonal: you died, your soul went somewhere and waited until Jesus would come back to this earth where your soul then went with Jesus into heaven, and even heaven with Jesus was a place very much like space without anything but stars, planets, clouds, and little activity.

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Some were taught that when you die, your soul goes to sleep until the Lord returns. At the return of the Lord, your soul is resurrected and judged with you either making it into heaven or sent to Hell. Even this concept of heaven was often that of a spirit world where the saved spend eternity only as a spirit, floating around in the sky, clouds, or air and playing a harp or doing other religious tasks.

This does not excite much of anyone, nor should it!! The idea of being unconscious for a long period of time in a grave, or just a soul floating around the universe, or being in an impersonal heaven without a body just does not sound like a goal for living your life to achieve it. But I want to assure you tonight that none of those concepts are Biblical concepts and Bible prophecy tells us that the Lord really has great gifts of love for each one of us as we pass from this life to the next.

#### What Should Christians Expect When They Die?

What does Jesus have in store for a Christian when they as die:

**1. When a Christian dies, our spirits never lose consciousness.**

*Philippians 1:21-23* “For to 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.”

The same point is also taught in *II Corinthians 5:8*, “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

There is no separation from Jesus, no staying in the grave, or no just being a soul drifting in space waiting for the Lord to return. In fact, Jesus has even more in store for us than us just being conscious of all that is happening and being immediately with Jesus.

**2. Our fully conscious spirits are immediately ushered into the presence of Jesus by His holy angels.**

*Luke 16:22* “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abrahams’s side.”

**3. Our spirits remain in the Lord’s presence.**

It is at this point we see the visions that John was given of the “Working Heaven” when it was, as now, the nerve center for the universe; we see groups of believers that are present with the Lord. Let me just share a few verses from the 7<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Revelation:

*Revelation 7: 9, 14-17* “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. . . . And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any

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*scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

#### 4. **Our spirits stay with the Lord in His presence until He appears for His Church.**

At that time, He brings our spirits with Him, resurrects our bodies, perfects our bodies—makes them ready for eternity. He then reunites our spirit with this new perfected body and the bible says that He then glorifies our bodies so that they are prepared for eternal life. We will live all of eternity in our new glorified and perfected body:

***I Thessalonians 4:13-19*** “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep (or are dead) among you, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For 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. According to the Lord’s word, we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

#### 5. **We return with Him to Heaven in our glorified bodies where we are judged for our works to determine our degrees of rewards.**

***II Corinthians 5:10*** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us, for the things done in the body, whether good or bad.”

When this judgment is completed, we participate in a glorious wedding feast to celebrate the union of Jesus and His Bride, the Church.

***Revelation 19:7-9*** “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people). Then the angel said to me, write this: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’”

#### 6. **At the end of the Wedding Feast, we follow Jesus out of the working heaven returning with Him to the earth in glory.**

***Revelation 19:14*** “The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.”

We witness His victory at Armageddon, we shout “Hallelujah?” as He is crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we share in the joy and glory as He begins to reign over all the earth from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem

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**Zechariah 14:1-9** *“A Day of the Lord is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it, the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from the east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him. On that day there will be neither sunlight or cold, only frosty darkness. It will be a unique day, a day known only to the Lord, with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.”*

We will witness the destruction of the foes of the Lord Almighty in His battle:

**Revelation 19:19-21** *“Then I saw the beast the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”*

- 7. Then we believers will participate in the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and will assist Him with the instruction, administration, and keeping his perfect laws. (Daniel 7:13-14, 18, 27 and Revelation 20:1-6)**

**Revelation 20:4-6** *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge, and I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”*

This is the time that the earth is regenerated, I believe, returned to the Garden of Eden like existence that God created. It will also be a time when nature is back at peace in every area and what sin had destroyed the victory of Jesus over sin has restored. It will be a time when peace, righteousness and justice flood the earth.

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**Micah 4:1-7 NIV** *“In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken. All the nations may walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever. “In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. I will make the lame my remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.*”

The Millennial Kingdom will not end well. Satan will be released and we shall witness his desire to lead an insurrection to overthrow the leadership of Jesus as King. We will watch as God supernaturally destroys them, see Satan cast into hell and know that he, like the Antichrist and the beast will suffer forever.

**8. We will then witness the Great White Throne of Judgment where the unrighteous are resurrected to stand before God.**

We will see the perfect holiness of God and justice of His actions as the sins and misdeeds of all the unrighteous are listed and read to all present. This is the time we will see Jesus vindicated in perfection. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. Those who confessed Him in life will receive their salvation and those who did not, will confess Him at this judgement just before they are justifiably sent to their earned reward of hell.

**9. This will set the stage for the greatest fireworks show of all time.**

We will witness it. We will be taken to the New Jerusalem; the eternal city prepared by Jesus for His Bride and find our eternal mansions that Jesus went to prepare for His bride. From there we will watch as God renovates this earth with fire, burning away all the filth and pollution left by Satan’s last battle. This will include a cleansing of the heavens, and the atmosphere:

**II Peter 3:12-13** *“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, where righteousness dwells.”*

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Just as the angels rejoiced when God created the universe, we will rejoice as we watch God superheat this earth and reshape it like a hot ball of wax into the New Earth, the eternal earth, the paradise where we will live forever in the presence of God.

**Revelation 21: 1-7** *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the Thone saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne, said, ‘I am making everything new!’ then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. ‘He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.’”*

Let me enumerate the great series of blessings that each of us will experience with God and with our Christ.

- We will be lowered to the New Earth inside the fabulous New Jerusalem, **Revelation 21:23**.
- God will come down from Heaven to dwell with us, **Revelation 21:3**.
- He will proclaim: *“Behold, I make all things new”* **Revelation 21:5**.
- We will see God face to face, **Revelation 22:4**.
- Death will be no more **Revelation 21:4**.
- We will be given new names **Revelation 2:17**,
- We will exist as individual personalities encased in perfect bodies **Philippians 3:21**.
- And we will grow eternally in knowledge and love of our infinite Creator, honoring Him with our talents and gifts.

That is very exciting.



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#### What Should Non-Believers Expect When They Die?

Death will be quite different for the unbeliever. These steps are Biblically what happens to each non-believer who dies.

- They will not participate in being in the presence of Jesus; they will not get an angelic escort to the presence of Christ.
- They will not raise with the Church when Jesus raptures the Church
- They will not participate in the Millennial Kingdom, Wedding Feast, the victory of Armageddon; nor the Bema seat of Judgement.
- From their point of death on, they will have little in common with what is happening for believers.

#### Jesus Has Over Come Death for Believers

Death is a fact that all people need to face and prepare for. The only people who are not going to experience death are those believers in Jesus Christ who are alive at the time He returns to rapture the Church ***1 Thessalonians 4:13-18***. Those believers who die before that time will overcome death through the resurrection and glorification of their bodies.

Jesus of Nazareth gave us the most comforting words ever spoken about death. At the tomb of Lazarus, before He raised his friend from the dead. Jesus proclaimed:

**John 11:25-26** *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

Sixty-five years after his death, burial and resurrection, Jesus returned to this earth and appeared to his dear friend John on the Isle of Patmos ***Revelation 1***. John was so astounded that he fell upon the ground like a dead man. Jesus laid his right hand on John and said:

**Revelation 1:17-18** *“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”*

Jesus has overcome death Himself, and He therefore has the power over death. Overcoming death for us is a matter of putting your faith in Him:

**1 John 5:1-5** *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God; by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, that is love of God; to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”*

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So, what happens when you die? If you are a child of God, your spirit is immediately ushered into the bosom of Jesus by His holy angels. Your spirit remains in Heaven, in the presence of God, until the time of the Rapture. When Jesus comes for His church, He brings your spirits with Him, resurrects and glorifies your body making it eternal in nature. You reign with Jesus for 1,000 years and then live eternally with Him on a new earth surrounded by a new heaven (eternal atmosphere).

#### What are Deceased Christians Doing Now?

The next Hope Looks Up study the question is: “What are Deceased Christians Doing Now?” This question has been on the lips of Christians from the New Testament times until today. Paul writes one of the most touching and compassionate passages of the Bible to try and console the Thessalonian Christians that their loved ones had not missed the rapture nor the return of Jesus. They mistakenly thought that you still had to be alive to gain this great reward with Jesus and those who were dead had just missed out.

To me, this question asked by the Thessalonian Church reflects the two main areas of confusion about what happens to deceased Christians when they die.

1. Many Christians see Eternal Life and the life after our physical life as kind of a continuum of life here on the earth; what you do eternally is what you enjoyed doing on earth, only with the really bad things taken out. For instance, a very common one is music. They choose the type of Christian music they like and say those will be the songs we will sing in heaven! God has not chosen one type of music over another. Just look at the songs that are in the bible as an example of what we will sing in heaven. They will be chants; singing psalms; and songs of thanksgiving for what God has done. There is not a liturgical Hymn, a Gospel Hymn, Contemporary Song; Praise Song; Southern Gospel Hymn or even a cantata in the Bible. By the way, I think God will lead us to a special style of music that will be appropriate for those in heaven and it will not be tied to any culture or music forms that were here on the earth. I take Jesus very literally when He says that He will make all things new!
2. The second area of confusion is that many people identify this world with sin, human frailties and misdeeds. They truly believe that heaven has to be something without the earth, so regardless of what the Bible says, they feel the earth will be totally destroyed, we will live a life exactly opposite of everything human and we will live in someplace “out there” far removed from the destroyed earth and all the sin that was in it.

So, you might say; some glorify the earth and see all of eternal life as a greater version of the good things on earth; while others see the earth and everything connected with it as sinful and eternal life has to include the destruction of the earth and the establishment of a heaven in an area we have never known or seen.

I want to look at each one of these answers and see how they match up with the Bible and then we will look specifically at what deceased Christians are doing now.

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Let me take the second area of confusion first. Isn't the world and everything in it so evil that it must be destroyed or you won't have a heaven? Have these critics overlooked **II Peter 3** where Peter describes God cleansing this earth, heaven and atmosphere with fire, before it is presented as the New Heaven and New Earth. This was the greatest doctrinal fight of the New Testament. Gentile Christians were converted from a Greek influenced culture that equated the body and all things physical as evil and the spirit in a person was equated with all things that are righteous and good. It does not take long as you read the New Testament to realize that Greek culture had influence on what Christians believed about life after death, and that it often contradicted the Bible. Much of the present teaching about eternal life is really lifted straight from Greek philosophy.

The first attempt to mix Greek philosophy and the teachings of God's Word came before the New Testament was all written. The name of this movement was Gnosticism. Many of the first Gentile converts tried to take the Greek thought, the intellectual thought of the day, and make all Scripture agree with the basic tenets of Greek philosophy.

Popular Greek thought was that all the material universe, including the human body was evil. This negative view of creation is diametrically opposed to Hebrew thought as revealed in the bible. The Bible teaches that everything God created was good: *“God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the 6<sup>th</sup> day.”* **Genesis 1:31**. Sin did corrupt the goodness of mankind, **Isaiah 2:5-6** but the Bible also teaches that the creation to some degree still reflects the glory of God, *“The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech and night after night, they reveal knowledge.”* **Psalms 19:1-2**. Most importantly the Bible teaches that the creation will one day be redeemed by God:

**Romans 8: 18-23** *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”*

This intermingling of Christian thought and Greek philosophy affected their belief in Jesus. They felt Jesus was not ever totally human, that would make Him evil, so Jesus was a spirit body or a phantom. John confronts this teaching in both **I John** and **Revelation**.

But it was the next time that it showed up in Church history that it has had the greatest effect on belief about heaven and eternal life. The philosopher/theologian Augustine was the one who incorporated the two and the council of Ephesus adopted his views in a Council meeting in 431 AD and it has remained Catholic dogma to this day. The main things that he spiritualized that are taught as facts in the Bible are:

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1. **First**, the Bible teaches that all believers will spend eternity in glorified bodies on a New Earth: **Revelation 21:1-7** NIV *1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children."*

He who was seated on the throne said *"I am making everything new!"* Then he said, *"Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

Such a concept was anathema to the Greek mind of Augustine. If the material world is evil, then he reasoned that the material world must cease to exist when the Lord returns. Augustine solved the problem by spiritualizing what the Bible said. He did this by arguing that the *"new earth"* of **Revelation 21** is just symbolic language for Heaven. He also ruled out any type of bodily resurrection, a literal interpretation of Revelation, and anything in Heaven that resembles anything that was on earth. This is the major view of Catholic and Protestant Churches today and most of the Christian world teaches this style of modified Greek philosophy.

2. **Second**, the common view of heaven is to take the things that we like on this earth, sort out anything bad from them and see that as our life in Heaven.

Some of the greatest confusion about life after death relates to the intermediate state between death and eternity (everything new in the new reward heaven and the new earth). Some people advocate a concept called *"soul sleep"*. They argue that both the saved and the unsaved are unconscious after death until the return of Jesus

But the Bible makes it crystal clear that our spirit does not lose its consciousness at death. The only thing that *"falls asleep, dies"* is our body. **II Corinthians 5:8** and **Philippians 1:21-23** both tell us that when we are no longer alive in a physical body, our spirit is alive in the presence of Christ. There is no idea that Paul thought he would be in a coma or unconscious for that period of time.

If our spirits retain their consciousness after death, where do they go? The Bible teaches that prior to the resurrection of Jesus as He conquered death, they all went to the Abode of the Dead or Hades. This is also called Sheol in the Old Testament. They went to one of two compartments of Hades: Believers to Paradise and Unbelievers to Tartarus or Torments. Jesus described Hades in **Luke 16:19-31**.

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The Bible indicates that after the death of Jesus on the Cross he descended into Hades to declare the good news that He had shed His blood for the sins of Mankind: **1 Peter 3:18-19, and 4:6**. When Jesus ascended into Heaven, Jesus took Paradise with Him, transferring the spirits of dead saints from Hades to Heaven.

**Ephesus 4:8-9:** *8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." 9 What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?*

**II Corinthians 12:1-4** [2Co 12:1-4 NIV] *1 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. 3 And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- 4 was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.*

We know from last week, the third heaven in Jewish thought was being in the presence of Jesus, God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The spirits of the dead saints are thereafter pictured as being in Heaven before the throne of God **Revelation 6:9 and 7:9**, we see in **Revelation 7:9** they were wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands and using their voices.

The Bible presents to us several instances when the actions of deceased saints are highlighted. We see Jesus rising from the dead and spending 40 days on this earth with a glorified body, did not have physical limitations, but may not have been His perfected body. The disciples recognized Jesus, so He had a temporary body they could recognize. The same could be said of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus did appear in His perfected body and the disciples were unable to look directly at Him **Matthew 17:1-3, 7**. We do not know how often God has given errands or tasks where deceased saints co-mingle with people on the earth, but we know that it happened Biblically and God could certainly repeat that as often as He deemed it needed.

#### Four Main Concepts of Eternal Life

1. **Atheist:** The atheist and usually the Agnostic do not believe there is one. To them death is the cold reality that the world has no answers or explanations. Most every philosopher and religion have something to say on the subject, but it can usually be summarized as 'we all have to die'.
2. **Secular Concept, Humanism:** The concept where death is presented as exactly the end. When you die, you cease to exist. So, they teach that you are not in your body; you are your body and when the body dies you cease to be.
3. **New Age Concept:** When you die, you have an energy field around you. When you die, your energy field joins all the other energy fields in the universe. While you go on living that

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larger energy field is sympathetic to your own energy field. It is you becoming a part of the force of all people.

4. **Christian Concept:** where the spirit never dies, but is escorted to the presence of Jesus where the believer will live forever with Jesus Christ.

#### Questions:

Let me touch on some of the specific questions that you asked me to include in the lesson.

1. **Can the deceased believers watch the living, hear them, see them and plead for them to Jesus Himself?** Although there are some passages of the Bible that might seem to teach that:
  - a. **John 21:1-6** Jesus seeing and being seen by the disciples after His death and resurrection;
  - b. **Hebrews 11** the great cloud of witnesses that watch what happens in our life to cheer on believers.
  - c. **Revelation 6** the martyrs.
  - d. **Revelation 12** the knowledge of the defeat of Satan.

We see that the Bible primarily shows deceased believers in the presence of Jesus and are directed by Him and not watching people still alive on the earth: keep in mind most believers would not be encouraged to see and hear all that their loved ones are doing. I think the Bible is clear on one point: If God has sent them on a mission, they will interact, otherwise they will not.

2. **Will the deceased believers have an individual personality?**

**Philippians 3:19b-21** says: *“Their mind is set on earthly things? But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”* Yes, all believers will have a personality, and it closely resembles the personality of Jesus, **1 John 3:2-3**.

3. **Will deceased believers help Jesus prepare a place for us when we get to heaven?** No, every quote in the Bible about the New Jerusalem, the home of the mansions Jesus spoke about in **John 14**, all say that it was built by Christ for His bride.
4. **Will everything be similar to the physical life on earth?** Will they need to sleep? No! Will they need to eat? We know that all believers will join in the wedding Supper of the Lamb, the rest of the time we have not been told about the need for food, but the Bible does say that Jesus will meet all needs, sun, drink, etc. So, I would think that if food is to be consumed, it will be something that Jesus does and not what a person would cook.

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5. **Will deceased believers enjoy the same recreational things we did here in this life on earth?** The new heaven and the new earth will all be new and built to last for eternity, so most of the things that were a part of our life on earth will not be appropriate or even possible in heaven: i.e., without mountains and cold weather, you will not ski or ice skate. We have such greater things to do, I do not think our minds will focus on our recreational things. We do not know all an eternal body will be capable of doing, but if we can fly, as indicated in Scripture, it would mean many things that we did on earth will just not be feasible or realistic in heaven.
6. **How much will deceased believers participate in our welcome to the presence of Jesus?** Definitely an assignment to angels, but Jesus could certainly make them a part of the welcome team. Will they recognize us immediately in heaven? Yes, they will know us and know who we are. It will be even deeper family ties than what we had with our earthly family, because it will be the full recognition of what it means to be brothers and sisters in Christ, have Jesus Christ as our brother, and God as a loving and compassionate Father.
7. **Are deceased believers active?** Yes, Jesus will give them assignments that match their gifts and they will have a strong desire to praise Jesus and worship Him. Will time pass for them like it does for us? No, there will be no sun in heaven, Jesus will be the constant light and there will no night and I feel that will be true in the working heaven like now and not just the reward heaven when the new heaven and the new earth are placed into existence. Without night, *Revelation* tells us, there is not a need for sleep.

I know we could ask and answer a dozen more questions about what deceased believers are doing and what they are not doing. Please feel free to continue to send those questions to me and from time to time I will insert the question and an answer into our future lessons.

One last thing we know about what deceased believers are doing now comes out of some passages in the Old Testament where Jewish thought had not had a fully formed view of heaven and the afterlife for believers. The deceased believers will not be in our worship services, they will not praise Jesus while among humans, and they will not direct our worship times.

Let me list three Scriptures that are from the teachings not fully developed as far as the Biblical view of heaven but still limit what the deceased will do here on this earth after they have died.

**Psalm 6:5** *“Among the dead no one proclaims your name, who praises you from the grave.”* David is teaching in this Psalm the need to praise God now while you can in worship and in public. Those who are deceased will not be given that chance of public worship nor private earthly worship.

**Ecclesiastes 9:10** *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor wisdom.”* It is just like making the Good Confession *“I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,”* while here on earth it is a faithful choice, but making the Good Confession of faith after the Great White Throne of Judgement when you are being sent to eternal punishment, but before you go, you will fall on your knees and confess Christ as your Lord. It will not save you but it will happen. So, Solomon is extolling

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His readers to do with all the might they have the things of God while here on earth. After this life is over, there are no ‘do-overs’, or good works to get you out of eternal punishment, or Purgatory, or Limbo or the wisdom to cross sides SO NOW BELIEVE IN JESUS! Reread **Luke 16** to see how those in punishment will want things to change. Nor will the saved come back to earth and help you with your Christian way or walk with the Lord.

**Isaiah 38:18** *“For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.”* Heaven is not understood completely by many of the Old Testament writers, but they were all right about recognizing that death ended the opportunity for earthly praise and worship in the presence of humans.

I want to contrast the Old Testament of limited understanding about heaven with the New Testament:

**II Timothy 1:9-10** says, *“He has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,”*

Make sure you are one of the believers:

**Romans 10:9** *“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”*