

There is

Life after Death

But how will it be?

What will we do?

Do we go to heaven or hell?

And if so, why be resurrected at a later date?

The truth may be quite different from what you assume!

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Introduction

In the chapel the mourners listen to the pastor. He exclaims how the deceased is now with Jesus in heaven. That seems a comforting idea. Later they all made their way out to their vehicles and start the slow journey to the graveyard.

At the grave the mourners gather again. A loved one is being honored, and laid to rest. Standing between the tombstones, the pastor promises that the person will one day be resurrected. And the people seem numb to the obvious contradiction.

If the person is already with Jesus why is a resurrection required? Why enter the resurrected body at a future date when you are already in heaven?

And if we have the option of going to heaven, what will we be doing there? Will it not be boring?

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And then there is the prospect that we may find ourselves in hell fire. That will be terrible! But wait. There is still a future resurrection that must happen. And if so, for what purpose will we escape hell and re-enter our resurrected bodies again?

Is this true? Will God really go and burn unrepentant sinners in hell? But how can that be if we are to be resurrected? Very confusing!

What are our prospects? Where may we find ourselves after death? Are there options? And what can we do about it?

What does the Bible really say on this subject? What happens after death? And can we do something about our future? We really need to know!

The truth from the Bible is quite different from the assumptions that people have made! It is very different from what many churches propose. The Bible actually has a lot to say about the

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afterlife. And it may be quite different from what many people believe!

Chapter 1

Do we go to heaven when we die?

What does the Bible say on this topic? Do we really go off to heaven the moment we die? Let's look at some scriptures. The first one is from Ecclesiastes.

“For the living know that they shall die; but the dead do not know anything, nor do they have any more a reward; for their memory is forgotten.

Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; nor do they any longer have a part forever in all that is done under the sun.”

(Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, MKJV)

This is quite a negative view. The indication is that when we die, our thoughts cease. We are no longer thinking, we have no further learning, no

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more any emotional experiences. It is like a deep sleep. Was the author speaking truth or was he just pessimistic? The indication is that under normal conditions we will never live again. But then Jesus came, and another possibility was born.

Let's look at a further inscription a few pages further.

“then man's dust will go back to the earth, returning to what it was, and the spirit will return to the God who gave it.”

(Ecclesiastes 12:7, ISV)

We see here a reaffirmation of the same notion. We go into a dead sleep.

However there is a bit of hope. The spirit of mankind returns to God. Is this possible? Do we have a spirit that is unique and separate from our physical bodies? Yes indeed. The prophet agreed with this.

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“The burden of the Word of Jehovah for Israel, says Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him.”

(Zechariah 12:1, MKJV)

Man has a unique spirit, more than the animals.

“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

(Job 32:8, KJV)

The spirit in man is given by God, and it gives mankind incredible powers to design, to plan ahead, to manage and build. It gives man the power to travel, to even go to the moon, and design the computer. This spirit also has the capability to understand God’s Word, and to form a relationship with God – something no animal can do! It makes man so much more than the animals.

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This Spirit can be received by God, but from what we have seen, it is stored in a static state. There is no further thought, nor any experience.

We will look at some more scriptures.

The psalmist further sings of this truth:

“Do not put your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no salvation.

His breath goes forth; he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

(Psalm 146:3 -4, MKJV)

We have the same indication. The thoughts cease. There is no further experiencing or acquiring of knowledge. This is basically the viewpoint from the Old Testament section.

What did Jesus say on this topic? When Jesus walked the earth, He had to deal with this issue in a convincing manner.

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Hence we have the story of the resurrection of Lazarus.

“He said these things; and after that He said to them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps. But I go so that I may awaken him out of sleep.

Then His disciples said, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get well.

But Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He had spoken of taking rest in sleep.

Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

(John 11:11-14, MKJV)

Jesus initially indicated that Lazarus was sleeping, but then He showed that bodily he was dead, even though spiritually he was sleeping. Later Jesus came to his tomb, where his body was laid.

“Then when Jesus came, He found him already being held in the tomb four days.”

(John 11:17, MKJV)

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So Lazarus was clearly dead, and according to Jesus, it was like sleeping. The body may have ceased, but spiritually the soul was sleeping. Jesus brought a new hope, which He was going to demonstrate. Notice further the understanding the disciples had at that point, having been educated by Jesus.

“Jesus said to her, Your brother shall rise again.

Martha said to Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Jesus said to her, I am the Resurrection and the Life! He who believes in Me, though he die, yet he shall live.

And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
(John 11:23, MKJV)

The disciples knew of, and believed in the future resurrection of the dead. However Jesus indicated that for the saints it will be as though they never experience death.

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Was He speaking of their bodies never dying? No! Clearly they all died. They are not with us today. Did He mean that they would go off to heaven when they die? No. So far there is no indication of this. He said that they are as if they sleep, till the resurrection. Let's continue with our education through this live demonstration from Jesus at the place where the body of Lazarus was laid!

“Then Jesus, groaning in Himself again, came to the tomb. And it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who died, said to Him, Lord, by this time he stinks. For it is the fourth day.

Jesus answered her, Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?

Then they took away the stone where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

And I know that You hear Me always, but because of the people who stand by I

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said it, so that they may believe that You have sent Me.

And saying these things, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, Here! Outside!

And he who had died came out, bound hand and foot with sheets, and his face was bound with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Untie him and let him go!”

(John 11:38-44, MKJV)

What we see here is the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. He died, and it was like sleeping. He was then resurrected in his physical body, to prove the resurrection of the dead, restored to their physical state. This is a promised from God, as we will see later. We don't see Lazarus having gone to heaven in wonderful places, only to be brought back to his physical state again. What a disappointment that would have been! No, we see that his death was like having slept for 4 days, and then being resurrected to his restored and healed physical body.

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Is this what happens to all of the dead? We need more scriptures to prove that this was not a unique situation.

What did the disciples understand about the patriarchs? What was the situation with King David? Was he in heaven? Or was he simply dead until his resurrection? This was mentioned in the sermon of the apostle Peter.

“But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and said to them, Men, Jews, and all who dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to my words.”
(Acts 2:14, MKJV)

The message from Peter was quite clear. Notice what he said about King David.

“Men, brothers, it is permitted to say to you with plainness as to the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him

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that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne,

seeing this beforehand, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor would His flesh see corruption,

God raised up this Jesus, of which we all are witnesses.

Therefore being exalted to the right of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you now see and hear.

For David has not ascended into the heavens, but he says himself, "The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand

until I place Your enemies as a footstool to Your feet."

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

(Acts 2:29-36, MKJV)

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So not even King David was in heaven at that stage, not even now, but is as though he is in deep sleep, until the resurrection, not knowing or experiencing anything.

This is also the case with the other patriarchs. They all died, and still have not received their reward. They are all dead, and are as though they are sleeping, not knowing anything.

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he went.

By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise with him.

For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

By faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past

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age, because she judged Him who had promised to be faithful.

Because of this came into being from one, and that of one having died, even as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

These all died by way of faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. And they were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

(Hebrew 11:8-13, MKJV)

So far they have not yet received the promises. So far they have not been honored. They have not seen the realization of what they were promised. They have never lived in the Promised Land. They are thus dead, and is as though they are asleep, not knowing what has happened since they died.

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“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, did not receive the promise, for God had provided some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us.”
(Hebrews 11:39-40, MKJV).

So they are still dead, until a future date, awaiting the return of Christ. There was never any talk of going off to heaven at the point of death. It was always understood that we are dead until the resurrection.

In the early Church some had difficulty believing in the resurrection. This was dealt with in the letter to the Church at Corinth.

“But if Christ is proclaimed, that He was raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

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But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is worthless, and your faith is also worthless.

And we are also found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified of God that He raised Christ; whom He did not raise if the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised.

And if Christ is not raised, your faith is foolish; you are yet in your sins. Then also those that fell asleep in Christ were lost.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruit of those who slept.

For since death is through man, the resurrection of the dead also is through a Man.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive.

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But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruit, and afterward they who are Christ's at His coming”
(1 Corinthians 15:12-23, MKJV)

Hence the patriarchs were still dead when Christ walked the earth, and are still dead till Christ's return. So will be the case for us as well.

If we go to heaven our hope would be there. We would not be hoping for a resurrection. But that is not the case. Our hope is in the resurrection. The reward is at the return of Christ, for us as well as the apostles, and the disciples and patriarchs. Our hope is not to enter heaven when we die. Our hope is in the resurrection.

What about the evil ones which were supposed to have gone into hell? Are they not in hell? The message is clear.

“And I have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there

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shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

(Acts 24:15, MKJV)

So nobody receive a just reward in the interim, not the good or the bad. Only after the resurrection will they know their fate. There is, and never was, any preaching of going to heaven or hell the day we die. We are asleep until Christ returns.

This is not all there is to it. What happens when we are resurrected? Are the good people then going off to heaven, and the evil people to hell? And what will we do in heaven? Or will the evil ones burn in hell, perhaps forever?

There are still many questions, which will be dealt with in subsequent chapters. For now we need to ask ourselves the question: where did the idea of immediately going to heaven after death come from? The Bible clearly does not support it. It was never taught in Israel. The rabbis never taught

this to the Jews. It was never part of Jewish understanding. Jesus did not teach it. Yet several centuries after Christ's first advent it became the general dogma. Why. To explain this we need to quickly discuss the progression of general Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome.

The origins of the doctrine of going to heaven the moment we die

When Christianity spread from Jerusalem to the gentile countries, many new converts with former pagan convictions started to enter the Church. They brought with them some pagan concepts that would not die easily. One of them was ancestry worship. In some third world countries today some still believe in ancestry worship.

When a loved one die, it is hard to accept it. We want to believe that the

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beloved one still exists. From our memory at night we almost feel the person is still somewhere in the home. We almost expect the person to greet us in the morning. Children still avoid doing things that their parent would have scolded them for. It is as if dad is still looking over our shoulders to see what we are doing. It is as if we feel the hurt in mother's eyes when we do wrong. It is as if the parents are still around. But that is pure memory function.

Pagan faith developed the theory that people still exist in space around us after death. It is as though we still feel their presence. Unexplained phenomena are attributed to the notion that the spirit of the deceased is still around us, and is still alive in spirit, and is influencing our daily lives. If we were ever scared to go against our parent's wishes when they were alive, we would be even more scared to do so after their death, seeing that the deceased would then seemingly have more power to check on us.

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This was a good sociological handle that leaders of pagan believe systems had over their followers. Even governments and dictators got in on the act. A dying king would make sure that citizens keep on honoring his legacy. This way his son would continue to reign, and the dead king's grave would be honored. The population would not want to collect on their stolen taxes.

However, when the Christian faith grew in pagan countries, it was causing a serious problem for people and governments alike. To understand that the loved one is not around in the spirit was too difficult for some. This was a stumbling block to many that would have been attracted to true Christianity. Control structures that had a hold on people thanks to ancestry worship would have mounted serious objection to the new faith. Children of former kings that held on to power despite corruption thanks to ancestry worship would have felt threatened by the new faith, and

would have mounted serious opposition to the truth.

The people would then not fear the dynasty, nor feel that they would have to answer to the deceased dynasty in the afterlife. Instead the dynasty would have understood that they all would have to answer to God. The people would have understood that as well.

In short, Rome would have nothing of it. With the Roman emperor apparently interested in converting to Christianity in the fourth century, a compromise with the truth was allowed. It is easy to see that a compromise between ancestry worship and Christianity would lead to the notion that we go to heaven the moment we die. It would please everybody, and would allow pagans more easy entry to Christianity. However it is not true.

The sad result of this untruth is that the rest of what will be discussed in subsequent chapters in this book were

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lost to general Christianity, for it does not make sense if it is true that the deceased are already in heaven. The truth of what we will be doing in the afterlife was lost in the Dark Middle Ages, but you can now learn the truth.