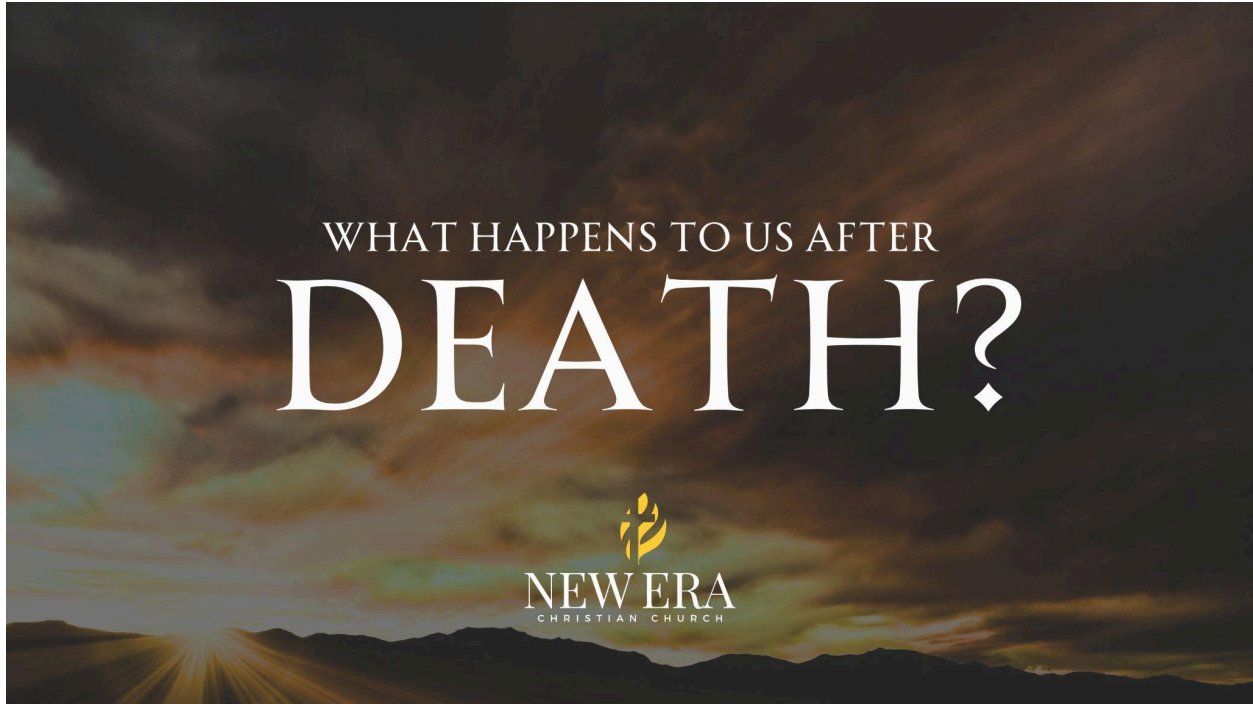




Pastor Calvin D. Williams

3/13/2024

Introduction:

There is a lot of confusion about what happens to us after death. The Bible is clear that there are only **two options** for where you go when you die: **Heaven or Hell**. The Bible also makes it clear that **you get to determine where you go when you die**. It's up to you!!!

Heaven

- ❑ Heaven is most certainly **a real place**.
 - ❑ No verses give us a **geographical location**.
 - ❑ Heaven is **where God is**.
 - ❑ Heaven is a place of fellowship and eternal joy.
-
- The **first heaven** is most frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the "**sky**" or the "**firmament**." This is the heaven that contains clouds, the area that birds fly through.

- The second heaven is outer space, which is the place of the stars, and planets.

(Genesis 1:14–18) And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years,¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so.¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.

- The third heaven, the location of which is not revealed, is the dwelling place of God.
- Heaven is also the destination of the Saints who died trusting God’s promise of the Redeemer (Ephesians 4:8). Whoever believes in Christ shall never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).
- Heaven is a place of “no mores.” There will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4). There will be no more separation because death will be conquered (Revelation 20:6).

(Revelation 21:4) 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.”

(Revelation 20:6) 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.

The second death: This event occurs at the final judgment, is experienced by personified Death and Hades and people who have not accepted Jesus (v. 15). It is called a second death because those who have already died bodily now die spiritually.

The lake of fire: This final death is permanent and inescapable.

- The best thing about heaven is the presence of our Lord and Savior (1 John 3:2). We will be face to face with the Lamb of God who loved us and sacrificed Himself so that we can enjoy His presence in heaven for eternity.

(1 John 3:2) Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, [for we shall see him as he is](#).

Hell

- ❑ Hell is a place of separation and punishment.
- ❑ More people believe in the existence of heaven than believe in the existence of hell.
- ❑ According to the Bible, hell is just as real as heaven.
- ❑ Hell is a real place to where the wicked/unbelieving are sent after death.
- ❑ The punishment of the wicked dead in hell is described throughout Scripture as “**eternal fire**.”

(Matthew 25:41) Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Description of hell

- “**Unquenchable fire**”

(Matthew 3:12) His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- “**Shame and everlasting contempt**”

(Daniel 12:2) Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

- a place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44-49)

Where their worm does not die: Jesus alludes to Isaiah’s description of the ultimate fate of the unrepentant wicked.

(Isaiah 66:24) And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.

- a place of “torment” and “fire”

(Luke 16:23–24) In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ 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.’

- “**Everlasting destruction**

(2 Thessalonians 1:9) They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Eternal destruction: Those who reject Jesus Christ will be separated from God’s presence and glory. This punishment will be everlasting.

- a place where “the smoke of torment rises forever and ever”

(Revelation 14:10–11) they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”

- “**Lake of burning sulfur**” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

Here, the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire, while their followers are killed with the sword from Christ's mouth.

- Some believe after death, everyone "**SLEEPS**" until final judgement, after which all will be sent to heaven or hell.
- Others believe that at the moment of death, people are **instantly judged** and sent to their eternal destinations.
- Others claim that when people die, their souls/spirits are sent to a "**Temporary**" heaven or hell, to await the final resurrection, the final judgement, and then the finality of their eternal destination?

1. Which one do you believe? Or is that important?

2. What does the Bible say happens after death?

Believers: Souls/Spirits are taken to heaven because their sins are forgiven by having received Jesus Christ as savior. How do I know that? (**John 3:16, 18, 36**)

(**John 3:16**) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

(**John 3:18**) **Whoever believes in him is not condemned,** but **whoever does not believe stands condemned already** because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

(**John 3:36**) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

- If our soul and spirit is taken to heaven as soon as we die, who's at the funeral?
- For believers, death is to be away from the body and at **HOME** with the lord.

(2 Corinthians 5:6–8) Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

5:8 absent from the body: When believers die, they leave the physical body and enter the presence of Christ.

- If believers go to be with Christ immediately after death, what is the purpose of the resurrection? **(1 Cor 15:50-54), (1 Thess 4:13-17)** Describe believers being resurrected and given glorified bodies.

(1 Corinthians 15:50–54) I declare to you, brothers, and sisters, 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, but we will all be changed ⁵² 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. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ 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 in victory.”

flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom: Eternal life with Christ and the inheritance of God’s kingdom will require a heavenly spiritual body like Christ’s. **(1 Cor 15:49)**. The perishable body of human existence will be replaced.

We will not all fall asleep: Implies that not all believers will die before Jesus returns.

15:54 Death is swallowed up in victory: Echoes **(Isa 25:8)** as a sign of the new age. In the age to come, the effects of humanity’s sin will be removed.

- **(1 Thessalonians 4:13–17)**

Believers Who Have Died

¹³ Brothers and sisters, **we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.** ¹⁴ 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**. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until 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**. ¹⁷ **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**.

Answer: The soul/Spirit of believers go to be with Christ immediately after death, the **PHYSICAL BODY** remains in the grave "**SLEEPING**." **At the resurrection of believers, the physical body is resurrected, glorified, and then reunited with the Soul/Spirit**. This reunited and glorified body-soul/spirit will be the possession of the believers for eternity in the new heavens and new earth. (Rev 21:22)

Unbelievers: Those who do not receive Jesus Christ as Savior. Death means **EVERLASTING** punishment.

- Similar to the destiny of believers, unbelievers also are sent **immediately** to a **temporary holding place**, to await their **final resurrection, judgement**, and **eternal destiny**.

(Luke 16:22-23) Describe the rich man being tormented **immediately** after death.

(Luke 16:22-23) "The time came when the beggar died, and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ **In Hades**, where **he was in torment**, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

(Rev. 20:11-15) Describe all the unbelieving dead being resurrected, **judged at the great white throne**, and then being cast into the lake of fire.

(Revelation 20:11-15)

The Judgment of the Dead

¹¹ Then I saw a **great white throne** and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the **dead, great and small, standing before the throne**, and books were opened. Another book was opened, **which is the book of life**. **The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books**. ¹³ **The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them**, and **each person was judged according to what they had done**. ¹⁴ Then death and

Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

(2nd Death) This is for those who have rejected Christ. It's not a place that believers in Christ should fear. **(REV 20:6), (Rev 20:14-15)** The second death is a reference to the Lake of fire where those who are separated from God by their sin will dwell for Eternity. This judgement was recorded in scripture as a warning to unbelievers to seek the salvation that only Jesus Christ can provide. This Judgement should also challenge believers to share their faith. There is a big difference between the final destinations of those who know Christ and those who do not!!!

- So, Unbelievers are not sent to hell (*The lake of Fire*) immediately after death, **but in a temporary realm of judgement and condemnation.** However, even though unbelievers are not instantly sent to the lake of fire, their immediate fate after death is not a PLEASANT ONE. The rich man cried out, I am in agony in this fire.

(Luke 16:24) 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.

- Therefore, after death, a person resides in a "TEMPORARY" heaven or hell.
- After this "TEMPORARY REALM" at the final resurrection, a **Person's eternal destiny will not change.** The precise "LOCATION" of that eternal destiny is what changes.
- Believers will be granted entrance into the new heaven and new earth.

(Revelation 21:1)

A New Heaven and a New Earth

21 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.

- Unbelievers will be sent to the Lake of fire. **(Rev 20:11-15)**

Conclusion:

These are the final **ETERNAL DESTINATIONS** of all people based on whether they believed and trusted in Jesus Christ alone for Salvation.

(Matthew 25:46) “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

(John 3:36) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

What Happens When We Die?

Death

Each day that passes brings us one day closer to death than before. We are warned: “it is destined for people to die once, and after this, judgement” (Heb 9:27). **Death comes for us all. Neither wisdom nor wealth can prevent it.** As Psalm 49:10 states, “For he sees that the wise die, together with the fool and brute they perish, and leave their wealth to the next generation.” **James also comments on the inevitability of death:** “you who do not know what will happen tomorrow, what your life will be like. For you are a smoky vapor that appears for a short time and then disappears” (James 4:14). **We all face the same end, unless Jesus returns first.**