

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 6 – What Happens After Death?

February 28, 2017

LUKE 16:19-31

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Within Evangelical Christianity there is a significant amount of confusion regarding what happens after death.

Some believe that after death, everyone “sleeps” until the final judgment, after which everyone 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 an “intermediate” state - to await the final resurrection, the final judgment and then the finality of their eternal destination.

Firstly - “Sleep” in Scripture is a euphemism for death! PLEASE KNOW – there is NO SOUL SLEEP after one dies. Heb. 9:27 – *it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment.* A person's destiny is set at death. There's no second chance. And, based on what we read in Luke 16 from Scripture – the person, the soul of man, after death is fully conscious, a person sees, hears, feels, and expresses emotions after death. NO SOUL SLEEP!

What does the Bible teach about life after death? We need to know the foundation. In order to THINK through the Bible, we need to know the Bible. We need to know the foundation because the Bible is God's UNFOLDING of His revelation from Genesis through to Revelation!

What is heaven?

Atmospheric heaven (Gen. 7:11-12; Psa. 147:8)

Planetary heaven (Gen. 1:14-17)

Third heaven – where God dwells. To say that God dwells in heaven is not to say that He is contained there. This heaven, the third heaven, is where God's throne resides.

Where is heaven?

There are no verses which give a specific location for heaven. The Bible speaks of heaven's existence and that access to heaven is only through faith in Jesus. Can we conclude that it's more important for us to focus on the GOD of heaven than to know heaven's location?

What about hell? Hell may have a physical location in this universe; it may be in an entirely different "dimension." Whatever the case, the location of hell is far less important for us to know. HOWEVER, to be cognizant of the need to avoid going to hell is CRUCIAL! It's life or death to grasp the need to avoid going to hell!

How did God create man?

- God created us with both material and immaterial parts. Gen. 1:31 - *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.* And that includes the material and immaterial part of man. It is significant in our study of the Bible to grasp that everything that God made – the physical universe and its physical inhabitants and man in a physical body - is VERY GOOD!
 - The material is obviously that which is tangible: the physical body, bones, organs, etc., and exists as long as the person is alive. The immaterial aspects are those which are intangible: soul, spirit, intellect, will, conscience, etc. These immaterial aspects exist beyond the physical lifespan of the individual.
 - The soul and the spirit are the two primary immaterial aspects.
 - While there are Bible verses that use the terms *soul* and *spirit* interchangeably (Matthew 10:28; Luke 1:46–47; 1 Corinthians 5:3; 7:34), other biblical passages do not present the soul and the spirit as precisely the same thing. Does the immaterial aspect of the human nature involve a soul and a spirit? Yes. Whether the soul and spirit are one or are distinct is unclear. Thus, you'll note within this handout the verbiage: "soul/spirit".
 - We do know that while the soul is the essence of our being, the spirit is what connects us with God. This is why the unsaved can be said to be spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13)
 - Regardless, offer your body as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), thank God for saving your soul (1 Peter 1:9), and worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24) because this is the teaching from Scripture!

Will we have physical bodies in heaven?

- The Bible does not give great detail about what we will be like in heaven. 1 John 3:2 - *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we*

shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

- *We shall be like Him....* Does Jesus have a physical body in heaven?

- The physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus is foundational to Christian doctrine and our hope of heaven. WHY?

- Because Jesus rose from the dead with a physical body, every Christian has the guarantee of his own bodily resurrection. Rom. 8:23 - *we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

- In His bodily resurrection, Jesus fulfilled Scripture (Psa. 16:10).

- The Bible is clear that Jesus' body was resurrected. The tomb was empty!

Jesus was recognizable to those who knew Him. Jesus appeared to His disciples following His resurrection. *Jesus was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep*

- Jesus declared in John 2:19-21 that He would be raised on the third day!

- In Luke 24:16 Jesus appeared to the two "disciples" on the road to

Emmaus.

- We read in Luke 24:36-39, in appearing to His disciples, Jesus made it clear that He was not a disembodied spirit, He had a physical body, *Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." ³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."*

- After spending forty days with His disciples, Jesus ascended bodily into heaven (Acts 1:9).

- At His incarnation, Jesus took on human flesh, and at His resurrection, His body was glorified, although He retained the scars (John 20:27). He will forever be the God-Man, sacrificed for us. He will be known to us in heaven in a tangible form that we can see, hear, and touch (Rev. 5; Rev. 21:3-4; Rev. 22:4).

- AND, Jesus is our first fruits (I Cor. 15:20-22). Jesus' resurrection was the "first fruits" of the resurrection "harvest" of the believing dead. The Jewish Feast of First Fruits was one wherein the first fruits of the harvest (barley harvest – the day after the Sabbath during Passover – Lev. 23:9-14) were dedicated to God commemorating the remainder of the harvest. The Jewish mindset: if God gave us this harvest, certainly there would be the future harvest. That "future" harvest is a harvest of resurrected believers. Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees our bodily resurrection!

- Matt. 27:50-53 - *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints (not all) who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.* God has given us a GRAPHIC picture of the results of Jesus' bodily resurrection! Here is a group of saints who were raised and LIVED! These were not raised simply to

die again like those miraculously raised prior to the cross (i.e. Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha). These who were raised at Jesus' crucifixion appear to serve as first fruits of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus is our First Fruits and even at His resurrection, He wasn't alone. Even at His resurrection – when He was raised as our First Fruits – there were first fruits – those who were the “perfect example” of what Jesus has accomplished for us!!! AND, notice, that they didn't come out of their graves until AFTER Jesus' resurrection so that He could be our FIRST fruits!

And so...

- We will have a physical body although not in the same sense of “physical” that we now possess. Phil. 3:21 - *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body....* Our heavenly body will differ from our present body in terms of flesh...in splendor, in power, and in longevity.

I Cor. 15:42-43 - *The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*

- Paul stated that the believer's body will be an image of Christ's body (I Cor. 15:49 - *And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*)

- Paul compares earthly bodies to tents and heavenly bodies to heavenly dwellings (II Cor. 5:1-2).

- Our resurrected bodies will have form and solidity to the touch as Jesus' glorified body. We need to remember that Jesus passed through walls (John 20:19, 26).

- Job declared, *And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God* (Job. 19:26)

- Whatever exact form we have, we know that it will be perfect, sinless and flawless.

For the believer in Jesus, since Jesus' crucifixion, the Bible teaches that after death, believers' souls/spirits are taken to heaven, because their sins are forgiven by having received Jesus as Savior (John 3:16, 18, 36). For the believer in Jesus since His finished work on the cross, death is to be absent from the body...present with the Lord (I Cor. 5:8). Death is a separation. At death, the soul is separated from the body. Gen. 3:19 – in God's curse on man after the fall, after man sinned, God declared, *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.* The soul of the believer in Jesus (OT saints and NT saints) is in the presence of God. BUT...what about the passages that we've been discussing concerning the rapture of the Church? I Cor. 15:50-54 and I Thess. 4:13-17 specifically teach a RESURRECTION which will occur at the rapture when the body and the soul/spirit are united, when believers will receive a glorified body.

Following Jesus' crucifixion, when the souls/spirits of believers go to be with the Lord immediately after death, the physical body remains in the grave. *Absent from the body* – in death, there's a separation between the body and the soul/spirit.

There is no glorified body given to the believer at death. The glorified body will be given at the rapture – at the resurrection (I Cor. 15:51b-53 - *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵² 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.⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*)

Rapture of those “in Christ” – resurrection of Church Age believers, those who have been placed into the body of Christ which is the Church (Col. 1:24) by the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13).

At the resurrection of ALL believers (OT saints, NT saints, Tribulation saints), 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 believers for eternity in the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21-22).

Do we label the believer’s soul in the presence of God in heaven as an “intermediate” state? That label is not in Scripture. And, yet, “intermediate” does indicate that something even better is coming!!! However, we need to realize that before this “something better, which is a glorified body, at death our souls are in the presence of GOD! Souls in the presence of God before resurrection have some form and solidity. Consider Moses and Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-3). Moses and Elijah were recognizable. Luke 9:30-31 - *And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah,³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.* Even pre-resurrection, Moses and Elijah have a body of some kind. And, Moses and Elijah had knowledge of Jesus’ death.

There is a change from redeemed souls in God’s presence and glorified bodies in God’s presence. That’s what “intermediate” means!

For the OT saints who were declared righteous, who were looking forward to the fulfillment of God’s promise of the coming Messiah, upon death **PRIOR TO JESUS’ ULTIMATE SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS**, OT saints who were REGENERATED and DECLARED RIGHTEOUS by God through the HOLY SPIRIT even though the HOLY SPIRIT did not indwell OT saints, those OT SAINTS went to the grave, Sheol. Their bodies underwent corruption in the grave; their souls were in “Abraham’s bosom” where there was no torment – a compartment in the grave for the righteous.

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus speaks of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man died and went to Hades (Gk)/Sheol (Heb.) - the grave. Because the rich man was not a believer, he suffered torment in flames! Lazarus, a believer, went to the grave. But, because Lazarus was saved, he was in another “compartment,” so to speak, in the grave. Lazarus was in Abraham’s bosom where there was no torment. A great gulf was fixed between the place of torment for the unrighteous and Abraham’s bosom for the righteous. This was what seems to have occurred prior to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. In the OT, the sacrificial system provided atonement – a covering for sin. Heb. 10:4 – *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.* Jesus is the

Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. (New Covenant in Jer. 31:34 - *For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.* Cross reference: Eze. 36:24-26).

What happened to the OT saints in the grave after the cross? There are those who teach that Jesus took the souls of the righteous into the presence of the Lord between His death and resurrection. Ephesians 4:8-10 - Jesus led captivity captive (quoted from Psalm 68:18). Through the OT sacrificial system, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Heb. 10:4). Israel looked forward to the Redeemer Who would take away sin. The blood of animals covered sin. Atonement comes from the Hebrew word kippur which means *to cover*. Jesus redeemed us. The concept of redemption includes the purchase, removal from sale, and the complete freedom of the ransomed (released) individual through the death of Jesus. The righteous who were being held in Abraham's bosom until His death on the cross were brought into the presence of God by Jesus between His death and resurrection. Since Jesus' redemption at His crucifixion, the soul of the believer who dies goes immediately to be with the Lord.

Paul writes in Eph. 4:8-10 that when Jesus ascended on high – between Jesus' death and resurrection... *Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."*⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

I Pet. 3:18-20 - *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited.*

Between Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus went down to where these spirits in prison (in chains – in the abyss – Jude v. 6) were to proclaim His victory (Heb. 2:14).

AND, Jesus, when He descended, led captivity captive – He took many captives. The reference seems to tell us that Jesus, between His death and resurrection, when He descended, led the souls of those who were saved in OT times - prior to His crucifixion – into the presence of God in heaven.

"Captives," for those of us who hold this view, in this context were those saved individuals, who were held captive by the forces opposed to God, until Jesus' finished work on the cross, having previously died, who were in Abraham's bosom until Jesus' death on the cross made the way for them to enter heaven.

Isa. 61:1 - *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;* (Heb. 2:14 - *that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*)

Resurrection for the OT saints – while the souls of the OT saints are currently in the presence of God since Jesus’ resurrection, OT saints will not be resurrected (body and soul united) until after the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1-2).

For those who are saved in the Tribulation, the Tribulation saints – we see the souls of the Tribulation saints martyred during the Tribulation in Rev. 6:9-11. They are seen as under the altar, (the altar before the throne [Rev. 8:3]) in the throne room of God, in God’s presence. The Tribulation saints will not be resurrected (body and soul united) until after the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1-2).

All the redeemed, those with glorified bodies, and those with natural bodies (having survived the Tribulation) – habitation in the Millennial Kingdom.

Ultimate eternal destiny for all the redeemed:

All the redeemed with glorified bodies – our ultimate eternal destination is the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21 & 22), the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev. 21:1).

For those who are not believers in Jesus, who do not receive Jesus as Savior, as Lord, death means everlasting punishment. There will be an ultimate eternal destiny for the non-believer. However, upon the non-believer’s death, their souls are sent immediately to a, shall we say, temporary holding place to await their final resurrection, judgment, and eternal destiny. The non-believer is separated from God for all eternity. Their bodies have undergone corruption in the grave; their souls are in that “compartment” in the grave where they experience torment – a compartment for (the wicked) those who are not righteous.

Rev. 20:11-15 describes the resurrection of all the unbelieving dead and their judgment at the Great White Throne. *Rev. 20:12 - And I saw the dead, small and great (all distinctions; ranks are of no value), standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.* Might we see degrees of punishment?

Will non-believers be given a new body at their resurrection at the end of the Millennial Kingdom before the Great White Throne of Judgment?

The account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 speaks of the non-believer, after death, in this “temporary” holding place, having a type of body in that the rich man has the ability to feel “torment.” He has the ability to see and speak and has a tongue that he wants cooled.

Jesus warned us in Matt. 10:28 - *to not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

After the Great White Throne, the non-believers will be cast into the lake of fire (description for their final destiny. Death and the grave – the temporary destination of

the non-believers - are cast into the lake of fire.). The “lake of fire” speaks to the seriousness of the judgment.

Non-believers are not sent to the lake of fire immediately after death. They are sent to a temporary realm of judgment and condemnation.

Hell - *ge-hinnom*, meaning “Valley (sons of) Hinnom.” This valley south of Jerusalem was where some of the ancient Israelites “passed children through the fire” (sacrificed their children) to the Canaanite god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:2–6). The place is called “Tophet” in Isaiah 30:33. In later years, Gehenna continued as an unclean place used for burning trash from the city of Jerusalem. Jesus used Gehenna as an illustration of hell.

Final destination of the non-believer:

The lake of fire and outer darkness are all terms describing the final destination of those who reject Christ. This is a state of complete separation from God, never-ending and inescapable.

The lake of fire will be a place of perpetual suffering and misery.

TAKE-AWAY

God loves us (John 3:16). God desires that none should perish eternally – none should be separated from Him for all eternity.

II Pet. 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Because God is also holy, just, and righteous, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. Rom. 6:23 – *the wages of sin is death*. Something had to die to pay the penalty for sin. God provided His own payment for our sin through Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus paid our sin debt so that we would not have to pay for it in hell for eternity (II Cor. 5:21). God has made the way for us!

First resurrection – resurrection of believers (Rev. 20:5).

Second resurrection – resurrection of non-believers/second death (Rev. 20:11-15).

QUESTIONS

Observations? Questions? Answers received?

Do you understand the afterlife? Can you verbalize it to others?

If you don’t understand, what is your challenge?

What impacted you most from Scripture regarding the eternal destinies?

What about God’s nature has impacted you in this lesson?

Did you benefit from the foundational truth provided in the handout?

What, from the foundation laid, is causing you to dig into Scripture further?

Why did I share that God’s physical creation is of HUGE significance? Why is that a “Bible study tool”? How can understanding God’s perspective re: His physical creation help you to grasp God’s plan of redemption?

HOMEWORK

Reread the handout and look up the references. NOTE: skimming the handout can cause you to think something was taught in the handout and in the lesson that is NOT what was taught!

KNOW THAT BIBLE STUDY TAKES TIME!

Read Psa. 83 and Eze. 38 and Eze. 39 for next week.