

Life After Death

“WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE?”

*A Bible class series devoted to unlocking the
mysteries of life after death.*

TEACHER : RAY REYNOLDS

“WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE?”
Unlocking the mysteries of life after death.

PARADISE & HADES PRIOR TO THE CROSS

Matthew 11:23 *And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. (i.e. Luke 10:15)*

Why does he mention the fate of Sodom (an OT city)?

Why is Jesus referring to the Sodomites as already doomed?

Matthew 16:18 *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

Why the gates of Hades?

Who held the keys to the kingdom?

What significance is there to the message about Hades in **Acts 2**?

What does Peter say later about this connection to Christ, the kingdom, and Hades?

Luke 16:19-31

Could the rich man see, speak, or hear?

Could Lazarus see, speak, or hear?

What are the differences between Paradise and Hades?

Why could “father” Abraham speak?

Luke 23:43 *And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*

Why did the thief get the privilege of being with Jesus? Seeing Jesus?

Was that fair to Lazarus if he was with Abraham?

What was Jesus supposed to be doing in Paradise?

Why didn't he go to heaven?

PROPHESIES ABOUT THE CROSS

Joel 2:1-32

What does this prophesy mean?

Psalms 16:8-11 *For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

What does this prophesy mean?

Psalms 132:11-13 *The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it; “I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body. If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimony which I shall teach them, their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore.” For the Lord has chosen Zion. . . .*

What does this prophesy mean?

Acts 2:31 *he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.*

Who was “foreseeing” this? Why?

THE TRANSITION BETWEEN COVENANTS & RELEASE FROM WAITING

Matthew 27:51-53

Why were people raised from the dead when Jesus died?

How does this resurrection differ from that of Lazarus in **John 11**?

Ephesians 4:8-10 *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**.)*

Why did Jesus descend into the "lower" parts of the earth?

How has he set the captives free? When did he set the captives free?

I Peter 3:18-22

Why does Peter speak of salvation and giving a defense before this?

Who preached? Whom did He preach to? Why did He preach?

PARADISE & HADES AFTER THE CROSS

II Corinthians 12:3-4

Where was Paul? What had changed?

Was paradise the same waiting place or was he referring to heaven?

I Corinthians 15:55 *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

Why does Paul mention Jesus defeating Hades after his death?

Why does he speak of Jesus declaring victory over Hades?

Revelation 1:18 *I am He who lives, and was dead, and I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

Is this a vision of the future or the present?

How did Jesus get the keys to Hades?

What does Jesus' death, resurrection, and power have to do with Hades?

Revelation 2:7 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*

Where is the tree of life? What is this area called? Why?

Is there more to learn from the book of Revelation?

Revelation 6:8 *So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.*

Is this a prophecy of things present or past to John?

Does Jesus already have the keys in (v.18)? Is He a liar?

Revelation 20:13-15

Why does he mention these things in real time and give it as a current theme already accomplished?

Why isn't Paradise mentioned as a place of waiting in Revelation?

LIFE AFTER DEATH

UNDERSTANDING REVELATION

Chapter 1

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must *shortly* take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to *all things that he saw*. ³ Blessed is *he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things* which are written in it; for *the time is near*.

If I tell you I'm coming to your house "shortly" what does that mean?

If I say a car is "near" what does that mean?

Does John expect his readers to take immediate action after reading this book? Why?

⁴ John, to the *seven churches* which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from *the seven Spirits who are before His throne*, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the *firstborn from the dead*, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Where are those seven churches?

Where are the seven Spirits (angels/ministers)?

Where is Jesus when John wrote this book of prophesy?

Why doesn't he say "was" before the throne or "will be" before the throne?

⁹ I, John, both your brother and *companion in the tribulation* and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, *write in a book* and send it to the *seven churches* which are in Asia: to *Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea*." ¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

How does John relate himself to the seven churches?

Why write to these seven churches?

Was the message of this book originally intended for every church in the world?

What makes these letters any different than those of Paul's?

Where are those seven churches now?

Why did they need this message so quickly?

Why is this message so urgent?

Why does John have to do this with expediency?

Chapter 1 cont.

¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am **He who lives**, and **was dead**, and behold, I am **alive forevermore**. Amen. **And I have the keys of Hades and of Death**. ¹⁹ Write the things **which you have seen**, and **the things which are**, and the things which will **take place after this**. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Why does Jesus boast about being dead and now alive?

Why does He mention the keys? How did Jesus get the keys to Hades and Death?

What does that have to do with their present struggle?

What does Jesus' death and power have to do with Hades?

Do you think John was worried about how Christians thousands of years after his death would understand Revelation?

Just from reading this first chapter, what was the intent of the message?

How were his intentions any different from I Corinthians or other letters from Paul?

Chapters 2-3

Who actually determined the contents of these letters?

Why write to these churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea)?

Do these letters have a personal touch or are they generic?

Does Jesus identify locations, people, and situations of that day and time?

Does Jesus promise these seven churches a reward? Explain.

Chapters 4-21

Do these chapters contain prophesy about things expected for those seven churches?

Why does John write of heaven and not Paradise or Hades?

Does John point some prophesy forward? Do some prophesies reveal past events?

For the most part, are not most revealing present day events?

Does the book center around Jesus and His accomplishments?

Doesn't it begin and end with His mission for those churches?

Does Revelation 20 describe the judgment of the wicked (Hades, Death)?

Does Revelation 21 describe the judgment of the righteous (Paradise, the first heaven/earth)?

Could the sea that separated them be the great gulf of Luke 16?

Chapter 22

¹ And he **showed me** a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the **tree of life**, which bore twelve fruits, each tree **yielding its fruit** every month. The leaves of the tree were for the **healing of the nations**. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be **no night** there: They need **no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light**. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Why does John seem to believe that heaven is already prepared?

How come he never refers to these visions as being fulfilled in the end times?

Does John reveal that we will be able to eat in heaven?

Will there be seasons, months, and days in heaven?

Will there be darkness at night time in heaven? Why?

Chapter 22 cont.

⁶ Then he said to me, "These words are **faithful and true.**" And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ⁷ "Behold, I am coming **quickly!** Blessed is **he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.**" ⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹ Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." ¹⁰ And he said to me, "**Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.**" ¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

What does he say "quickly" again?

Why the urgency?

Why does the angel say that the "time is at hand"?

Why doesn't the angel require him to teach it to prepare for the end times?

Why isn't there any discussion of the final judgment scene?

Doesn't it seem strange that most of those judged included Jews and early Christians?

¹² "And behold, I am coming **quickly**, and My **reward** is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." ¹⁴ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the **tree of life**, and may enter through the **gates into the city.** ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to **testify to you these things in the churches.** I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the **water of life** freely.

What does he say "quickly" again?

Is he hoping that his hearers take notice of something? What?

Who is going to get that reward?

Could it be referring to the rewards offered in chapters 2-3?

What does he speak of the tree of life and the gates of heaven?

Does Jesus want this hope available at the future judgment or to the seven churches?

Why does he speak of giving a reward "quickly"?

Why is there a distinction between the saved and the lost if judgment has not already taken place?

¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone **adds to these things**, God will **add to him the plagues** that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone **takes away** from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall **take away his part from the Book of Life**, from the **holy city**, and from **the things which are written** in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming **quickly.**" Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

If we add to, take away, alter, or incorrectly misinterpret and teach these things, what is the danger?

Can we know the truth?

Can the truth set us free?

If we take Revelation at face value can it offer us hope?

Why does Jesus, yet again, promise a swift (quick) response?

LIFE AFTER DEATH

DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption #1 – “No Tears In Heaven”

Our “hymnology” has become a dangerous teaching tool.

We are commanded to teach through our singing, but only truth (**Colossians 3:16**).

Are there tears in heaven? YES!

Isaiah 25:8 says, “*He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord **GOD will wipe away tears from all faces**, The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.*”

What exactly does it say?

If he wipes them away from our face, then aren't they present?

How can he wipe something that isn't there?

Revelation 7:9-10 says, “*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and **crying** out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*”

Why does revelation say that there is crying if there is no crying?

Why are they worshipping with crying?

Why didn't God cast them out for crying?

There is an angel crying out to God in **Revelation 14:15**, why is he allowed to cry for God to thrust his “sickle and reap” in the wicked?

Could he do this without tears?

Revelation 7:17 says, “*And **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**”*

What exactly does it say?

If he wipes them away from our eyes, then aren't they present?

How can he wipe something that isn't there?

Revelation 21:4 says, “*And **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor **crying**. There shall be **no more pain**, for the former things have passed away.*”

What about tears of joy?

Why is pain, death, and sorrow mentioned in accordance with this crying?

Is this a command or a blessed hope?

Could it be that God will comfort us?

How could we believe that there is no crying when it is obvious some of the martyrs around the throne showed anger about being killed?

Could you be happy when you were pleading with God to “avenge” you?

Would you be happy if you were watching your brethren die?

Are you sure that they never “shed” tears in heaven?

Assumption #2 – “No Consciousness In Heaven”

This is obvious in Paradise, but not heaven.

Heaven is an eternal rest, but a conscious rest, unlike Paradise.

Lazarus didn't have a clue, but those in heaven do now.

After describing the faithfulness of dozens in **Hebrews 11** the author says, “*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight*” (**Hebrews 12:1**)

Why do they “surround” us? How do they “surround” us?

What does it mean when it says they are our “witnesses”?

Why are they spoken of as being in the clouds?

There are many other passages in Revelation that are key to understanding this.

Revelation 2:13 says, “. . . . *did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*”

Do you think that when Jesus mentions the faithful martyr, Antipas, to the church at Pergamos and discusses the many persecuted people that the churches would have assumed that the martyr of Revelation were someone else?

Why mention their persecution and martyrdom if not to give hope?

Why describe their trials if not to show what happened to the faithful?

Doesn't this prove a present day issue?

Revelation 4:4 says, “*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*”

Why were these men given entrance to heaven?

Why are they special?

Were they conscious or unconscious?

Revelation 4:7, 11, 14, 19 reveal that these elders can speak, sing, etc.

Can you fall down and worship without being conscious?

Can you sing without being conscious?

Why are they referred to as those from the “great tribulation”? (7)

Could that have anything to do with the seven churches? (2-3)

Revelation 6:9-11 says, “*When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and **avenge our blood** on those who **dwell on the earth.**” ¹¹ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their **fellow servants** and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*”

What were they doing in heaven while there were others “dwelling on the earth”?

How is that possible?

If these mentioned are the only ones in heaven, why the favoritism?

If they were worried about their brethren were they conscious?

Again, could this be done without anger or tears?

Where did they come from? How did they get there?

Why are they mentioned almost immediately after the seven churches?

Was this done to offer hope to the believers in the seven churches?

Assumption #3 – “The Dead Christians Must Come Out of the Graves Before We Ascend To Heaven”

The most difficult questions surrounding this issue deal with the final judgment.

What happens to the order of **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**?

Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Who are the dead in Christ here? – **Romans 6:11**

Isn't this the same thought found in **Romans 8:10-11**?

I Corinthians 15:15-19 says, “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”

Who are the dead in Christ here?

Why does it say they must rise first?

What does the term fallen asleep mean in this text?

Doesn't **Matthew 27:52** say that their graves of the saints were opened?

What does **I Corinthians 15:6** say about the Christians that died?

Is it possible that they have already risen with Christ?

I Corinthians 15:50-58 says, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: 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. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Can we be corrupt (mortal) to enter heaven?

What does that mean for those who have already died?

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Some argue that Paul has a history of using the words “dead in Christ” to reveal the sinfulness of a Christian (**Romans 13:11, I Corinthians 15:29-34, Ephesians 5:14**).

What does it say about Jesus and those who are asleep in Jesus?

If he is going to “bring with Him” those who have died will they already be conscious?

Why does Paul teach that when we die we begin a new life (**I Corinthians 15:35-37**)?

Doesn't he describe it as an immediate change (**I Corinthians 15:44-45**)?

Is it possible that the first resurrection has already taken place?

If they rise to meet us does that have to mean that they were below us?

Assumption #4 – “No People Are In Heaven Right Now”

Notice the elders, the multitude that could not be numbered, the saints, the martyrs, etc.

Revelation 8:3-4 says, “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the **prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.” –

Also see **Revelation 5:8**

If this is future prophesy of the end time why didn't God answer these prayers of the saints?

How could prayers be ascending if this is the end times?

If God ignored these prayers, what does that mean?

Why did this effect the people in heaven that were present?

The many elders, martyrs, saints, and angels cry out to God: “*You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints*” (**Revelation 11:18**).

Why are they crying out for the living, unless there are still people “living” on the earth when they are crying out?

Would it make any sense to cry out if the world has ended?

How did these people get entrance into heaven?

Satan is given authority to “*make war with the saints*” and to “*overcome*” the saints in **Revelation 13**.

When did this take place?

It must have happened while these people were in heaven because they are mentioned still around the throne when it happened?

How could it happen with the dead at the throne and the living on the earth unless its not referring to final judgment.

Isn't their patience rewarded in **Revelation 14:12** and its not eternal life?

Revelation 7:9-10 and **Revelation 19:1-6** reveal that there is a multitude already in heaven worshipping, singing, and praising God.

CONCLUSION:

By rightly dividing the word of God we realize that Jesus died on the cross and rose again. During those three days he released the Hadean realm from bondage, since they were “waiting” for many years for his death. . . . the new covenant was prepared. . . . the veil was rent in two. . . . the graves of the saints were opened. . . . the eternal fate of the underworld was determined. . . . the multitude in Hades was finally condemned to Hell and the saints (at rest in Paradise) were ushered into heaven. The saints are witnesses and advocates for the rest of the world as they await final judgment in heaven (**Hebrews 11**). They are watching the world in “real time” and praying for our deliverance. At this very moment, God is sitting on His throne, with Jesus at His right hand, awaiting the day to send the Savior back to the earth to pronounce the final judgment on mankind.