

What Really Happens to Believers When They Die?

Today's Text:
2 Cor. 5:6 – 8

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
~ Phil. 1:21

The moment when one goes through the door of death has always been a great mystery to mankind. In the April 11, 1993 entry of Moody's *Today in the Word*, it reads, “Before his death in 1981, American writer William Saroyan telephoned in to the Associated Press this final, very Saroyan-like observation: ‘Everybody has got to die, but I have always believed an exception would be made in my case. Now what?’” For those who know Jesus Christ and His Word, however, there is no such despair! In the following study, we will become reoriented with the truth about what really happens to believers when they leave this world. And we will learn it from God's own Word.

1). **Man has an *ETERNAL SOUL/SPIRIT*...**

(Gen. 2:7; Job 33:4; Ecc. 3:11; 12:7)

2). **At death the soul/spirit of a person *DEPARTS* from his/her body...**

(Gen. 25:8; 35:18; 35:29; 49:33; I Kings 17:20-22; Job 14:10; Luke 23:46; Acts 5:10; 7:59-60)

3). **In the Old Testament era—from the time of Adam to the time of Christ—the soul/spirit of a person went to *SHEOL/HADES* at death, whether a believer or an unbeliever. The believer went to the *Paradise* “section” of Hades and the unbeliever went to the *Torment* “section” of Hades.**

(Num. 16:30; Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15; 16:19-31; 23:42-43)

4). **When Christ ascended back to the Father, however, He took Paradise and its occupants *with Him* to the City of God, the New Jerusalem. Therefore, from that time to the present, only the *unsaved* go to Hades, where they await the “Great White Throne Judgment”.**

(Eph. 4:8; Rev. 2:7; 20:11-15)

5). **At death, the soul/spirit of the believer goes *immediately* into the presence of Christ in Paradise (2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:21-23), even though his/her *body* goes into the grave and “knows nothing”.**

(Ps. 146:4; Ecc. 9:5; 12:7)

6). **At the rapture of the church, when the *bodies* of every believer—both living and dead—will be “caught-up...to meet Christ in the air”, the *souls* of those believers who've been with Christ in Paradise will be *reunited* with their bodies, even as they are snatched from the grave. Those bodies will be “raised incorruptible”, all of them being “changed” and glorified into the likeness of Christ's resurrected, glorified body.**

(1 Thess. 4:13 – 18; 1 Cor. 15:51 – 55; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:20 – 21)

OVER PLEASE →

Discuss the following questions together...

1. Since man has an *ETERNAL SOUL/SPIRIT* – *not just flesh & blood* – how should this impact the way we see others? How about the way we see ourselves?
2. Since the soul/spirit of a man *DEPARTS* from his body at death and therefore *survives the death of the body*, how does this impact your attitude about death?
3. How does the story that Jesus told in **Luke 16:19-31** impact your thinking about what people *experience* after death? How about the account of Stephen's death in **Acts 7:54-60**?
4. The Bible indicates that Christ took Paradise and its occupants (believers) with Him when He ascended back to the Father, thus *emptying* that part of Hades. Therefore, from that time to the present, only the *unsaved* go down to Hades where they await the *Great White Throne Judgment of Christ*. How does this make you feel about those who have yet to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior?
5. Since the souls/spirits of those who have died are confined to either *Hades* (unbelievers) or *Paradise* (believers), do you think it is possible for *either one* to come back to “haunt” certain places or communicate with us today? How do we, therefore, account for the “paranormal activity” that people say they experience today? Consider the way Satan, chief of the demons, operates in 2 Cor. 11:14.
6. The Bible makes it very clear that the believer, at death, goes *immediately* into the presence of Christ in Paradise. Does this scenario describe the one *YOU* will experience? Why/why not? Consider 1 John 5:13.