

# The Gospel of John

## What Happens When I Die?

Hebrews 9:27-28, John 5:28-29

### INTRODUCTION:

Jesus was in front of the Jewish leaders making astonishing claims of equality with God. And in the middle of those verses, verses 21 and 22, are two claims that essentially are the most elevated of all claims. That claim was that He has the **power to give life** and **the power to judge**. That is to say, He brings people into existence and then determines the nature of their eternal existence. This is an act that only God can do, so Jesus is claiming to be God.

This morning I would like to answer the question from scripture "**What Happens When I Die**"? I am sure that all of us have contemplated that question many times in our life.

There is a lot of misconception about the subject because, as humans on this earth, we are not able see beyond the grave.

The image that many people see of people in heaven wearing wings or floating on clouds playing harps is so far removed from reality that it's almost comical. There is nothing in the Bible about spending endless time floating around or above the earth or doing nothing more than playing harps and floating (or flying) around in the clouds. To have the wrong view of heaven is sad because we just don't realize the glory that's coming.

When a person dies, physicians usually check for cardiac death (when the heart stops beating) or brain death (when there is no more electrical activity in the brain). We can experience seeing death, but we cannot see or understand what happens after death with our five senses.

What is death? Do we die and just cease to exist or do we have a soul? If we have a soul or spirit, what actually happens that causes it to leave the body? How does it know where to go? Does it wander around aimlessly as some suggest?

### All Stand and Read Scripture.

#### **Hebrews 9:27-28 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

#### **John 5:28-29 (NASB)**

<sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

### Prayer

## **BODY:**

### **I. WHAT HAPPENS IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH?**

Jesus gives us insight to what happens immediately after death with His parable of **The Rich Man and Lazarus**.

#### **Luke 16:19-26 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. <sup>20</sup> And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. <sup>22</sup> Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. <sup>24</sup> And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.’

You see here that the rich man died and his body was buried but his soul went to Hades, the holding place for the unsaved. Lazarus was carried away by angels to "Abraham's **bosom**". This is synonymous to Paradise, the home of the souls of the righteous awaiting resurrection.

So we see that the souls of the righteous and the souls of the unrighteous are separated at death. **Do you understand the implication of this?**

It means that **immediately** after death, you will **KNOW** that there is a God and you will **KNOW** your eternal destination. Even during the intermediate period between our death on earth and the resurrection of our glorified bodies, the unrighteous will be in agony in Hades and the righteous will be in eternal comfort.

For those who died in sin, the time of their salvation has passed. Just like the rich man, they will, from that time on, eternally wish that they had believed in and served God during their short lifetime on earth.

For the righteous, they will be overwhelmed by the love of God and His presence. Our faithfulness to God when we were weary and hungry and tempted and scorned and hated and scourged and spit on for our faith in God is now being rewarded. You are now engulfed in eternal love due to your faith and Christ's act of redemption on the cross where He bled and died on the cross for your sins.

Now, what that all sums up to is **perfect joy**. Heaven is the place of unending joy.

The joy that we experience in this life is always mixed with sorrow, isn't it? You get a little bit of joy but you can't fully enjoy it because there's too many other problems. Joy is mixed in this life due to sin. At best, it is mixed with sadness and sorrow, and discouragement and disappointment, and worry and fretting and anticipating.

But when you get to heaven our sorrow is converted to absolute unmixed joy!

## **When we die as Christians, we will receive a perfected soul.**

We have within our souls, within our inner man, the seed of perfection, but the soul or the whole inner person is not yet perfect. Listen, it's not just my body that sins, it's my mind and my thoughts and my will and my emotions. My soul is not perfected. But the moment a believer dies, that believer's soul enters immediately into the presence of God and is instantly perfected and made holy. The body goes to the grave; the soul goes immediately to heaven.

### **2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight— <sup>8</sup>we are of good courage, I say, and **prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**

So, when a believer dies, that unperfected soul is instantly perfected in the presence of God. The body goes to the grave. So, the first thing you need to know is that our soul goes to **paradise** without a body.

Our bodies are all still on the earth rotting away. All of the saints who have died and are now in heaven are only in heaven in their spirit without their body.

If I were to die today and I was found faithful, my soul would go to heaven; my body would probably go to Lucerne, MO cemetery. My soul or my spirit, same thing, would be with the Lord.

**Now, what would my perfected soul be like?** Well, the only thing I can tell you is that God could scrutinize my entire perfected soul to the nth degree, and He would find no imperfection and no sin at all. I would be absolutely perfect. I don't know any other way to explain that. When our souls go to be with the Lord we will have perfect freedom from all evil forever. **Imagine that!** Never a sinful or selfish thought, never an evil word, never a thought of jealousy or anger, but absolute eternal perfection. Never doing anything but that which is absolutely righteous, holy and perfect before God. Can you imagine yourself behaving in such an incredible fashion? I find it almost unbelievable.

### **Revelation 21:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup>and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then there is a description of the unrighteous...

### **Revelation 22:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup>Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Nobody is going to be in paradise and ultimately heaven who isn't perfect. Death means the separation. As unsaved on earth, we are dead in our sins. That means that we are separated from God. When we die physically, our soul is separated from our body. The bodies go to the grave; the spirit goes to be with the Lord.

How long does that last? Well, only until the resurrection.

## **II. WHEN ARE WE RESURRECTED?**

Every person who has or ever will live on this earth will experience resurrection.

### **John 5:28-29 (NASB)**

<sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

Every human being who has ever lived will be raised from the dead and there will be a literal, physical resurrection of the **ungodly** just as there will be of the **godly**. There will be a physical resurrection unto judgment or damnation just as there will be a physical resurrection unto life. Everyone who has ever lived on this earth will be raised from the dead. Eternity is not just a place for spirits, it is a place for resurrected bodies containing spirits.

Now that raises the next question: **When do we receive our resurrection bodies?** When do we get our resurrection body? Is it immediately upon death? When we die, do we immediately receive our resurrection body? Well, the answer to that is, no. The resurrection body is not some different body. It is this body transformed into a glorious, immortal, Spirit-filled, **incorruptible form**. So if we received our resurrection body immediately upon death, the graves of all the Christians would be empty! There would be no corpses left in the tombs because our resurrection bodies are the transformation of this earthly body. Therefore, the resurrection doesn't take place immediately upon death. Rather this takes place at the second coming of Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 51-52 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

...<sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

As Christians, we were all spiritually dead due to the sin of Adam. Jesus freed us from sin on the cross and made us spiritually alive. At the last trumpet, (the second coming of Christ), we will all be resurrected in the twinkling of an eye, into a imperishable body.

Paul gives us the most complete description of this transformation that will take place at the second coming of Christ is in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Paul says that at the second coming of Christ the dead in Christ will be raised first, then those who are still alive at that time will be transformed into their resurrection bodies, and we shall always be with the Lord. **We do not receive our resurrection bodies until the second coming of Christ!**

When God made man He made him soul and body. He made him an inner man and an outer man. And when He perfects him, He's going to perfect him as an inner man and an outer man also. We are designed by God to be a body and a soul. And our ultimate perfection demands that we be a body and a soul. And the creation of a new heaven and an actual new earth also demands that we have bodies that can walk on a real earth. The new earth then calls for its inhabitants to have real bodies.

You might ask, **How in the world could God ever create a resurrection body?**

How can God awaken physically dead people who have deteriorated into dust? How about the cremated people?. How will He pierce the clods and the waters of the world and the dirt and dust and find the dead and bring those long-forgotten forms into the world of the visible.

**This is astonishing power: mind-boggling power!** How do you literally in the twinkling of an eye recreate every human being who has ever lived and join that recreated form suitable for heaven or hell with the appropriate spirit. The power is beyond imagination...beyond comprehension. But that hour will come.

Do you realize there are no two trees on the face of the earth alike? No two seeds alike. No two animals alike. No two people exactly alike. No two celestial bodies alike. And somebody says, "Well, how in the world could God ever create a resurrection body?" God's creative power is so powerful, that bodily resurrection will be a "walk in the park".

God can make any kind of body He wants. As one body differs from another, so the resurrection body can differ from the body we know now. Somehow, it will connect up with us. It will have our human personality in it. But it will be preserved forever with all its distinctions, with all its uniqueness in absolute and eternal perfection. And so, the graveyards of men become the seed plots of resurrection.

### **1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (NASB)**

<sup>42</sup> So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

How in the world can something die in order to give life? How can a seed go into the ground, decompose and give life? I don't know.

But I do know that if God could create us, He can certainly remake us!

So what is this spiritual body going to be like?

### **III. WHAT WILL OUR GLORIFIED BODIES BE LIKE?**

It's going to be imperishable; that is, it never decays. You will never lose any part of that body. There will be no elimination process in your body.

Some have asked, How old will I be in heaven? We will not experience time in heaven. We will not age. We will be made into an imperishable body at its prime. It will be permanently and eternally perfect, and it will never change.

Now look at verse 47-49

### **1 Corinthians 15:47-49 (NASB)**

<sup>47</sup> The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

Stop at that point, folks. You just got a tremendous insight. Just as we are on this earth like Adam, we will be in heaven **like whom? Like Christ.**

<sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of **What? the heavenly.** It's incredible. We're going to be like Jesus Christ. We're going to be exactly like Jesus Christ. Well, what was He like? Well, He was incorruptible and eternal. He is glorified and we shall be also.

### **Philippians 3:20-21 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup> who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the **body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

We shall possess "The body of His glory." I just can't imagine that.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Well, what application does this have for us today?

**FIRST, it means that death is not the end.** Our life does not cease at death. Your soul will separate from its body, but you will not cease to exist. You will live forever, either with Christ or apart from Him. What that means is that the lives that we live now have eternal significance. We have the awesome privilege of determining where we will spend eternity. Therefore, the things that we do now in this life are of enormous, because our eternity rests upon our decisions.

**SECOND, it also means that this intermediate state will bring us closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.** In this intermediate state, we will experience a more intimate and personal fellowship with Christ, and therefore this is something that we can look forward to.

And **THIRD, the resurrection will bring complete physical and emotional healing.** In the resurrection we will be freed from every disability, every infirmity, and every disease. Complete physical and emotional healing will be ours!

Our longing for heaven should be intense. If you find your joy and your comfort in this life overwhelms your appeal for heaven, your passion is irrational.

Let me tell you why. God wants to make you like Christ. If your passion is to live in this earthly life, then you are **idolizing** a passing, sin-filled, decaying world. IF this is where you seek your comfort, and this is where you stack your treasure, you are irrational as well as sinful. You are seeking satisfaction that will never be found. Because the things of this earth will never satisfy.

How much better to long for heaven? We should yearn for heaven like just as a prisoner yearns for freedom; as a sick man yearns for health; as the hungry yearns for food; and as the thirsty yearns for water. We should long for heaven like the farmer does for harvest, like the worker does for payday, like the runner does for winning. And if we don't, something is wrong.

### **The Family of God.**