

G:love Q&A *Focused Living*

This sheet was produced with a heavy reliance on the writings of Wayne Grudem, Millard Erickson and Randy Alcorn

Q: What happens to a Christ follower when he/she dies?

A: The moment our physical body is no longer living, our soul and body are separated. At this time, God miraculously completes our **sanctification**. We are now like Christ, holy and free from sin. Our soul is immediately in Christ's presence in a paradise the Bible calls Heaven. We continue in this conscious, pure state until **glorification** day, when our souls are reunited with our resurrected body. Subsequently, there will be a final judgment, where our deeds on earth are judged for the purpose of distributing rewards. Then, for eternity, we live with God on the resurrected earth, called by the Bible the New Heaven and New Earth.

The moment our physical body is no longer living

Hebrews 9:27 ...it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. Physical Death is a consequence of living in a fallen world, just like aging and illness. It is a real and inescapable condition of being human. 250,000 every day die. However, death is not natural or God's original desire. God allowed death as a consequence of sin. (Gen 2:16,17; 1Cor 15:21) The Bible refers to death as an enemy (1Cor 15:26).

Two men, Enoch (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5) and Elijah (2Kings 2:11) did not experience death. God just took them!

Our soul and body are separated

James 2:26 *For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.* Ecclesiastes 12:7 *then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.*

God designed us as a unity of body and soul. However, we are capable of existing without our bodies.

At this time, God miraculously completes our sanctification.

We are now like Christ, holy and free from sin.

God uses hardship and suffering in our life to sanctify us (Rom 8:28-29; Heb 2:10; James 1:2-4; 1Pet 5:10; Rom 5:3-5). Physical Death is the ultimate hardship and God uses it to produce the ultimate result: complete sanctification/holiness like Christ.

White garments signify holiness (Rev 3:4-5;18; 4:4;6:11; 7:9,13,14)

Our soul is immediately in Christ's presence in a paradise the Bible calls Heaven.

2Cor 5:8 *to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*

Luke 23:43 *"I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

Luke 16:22 *"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom;*

Heaven is where God the Father and God the Son dwell (Matt 6:9; Mark 16:19; John 14:2-3; Acts 1:10-11; Acts 7:55-56; etc)

Read Rev 6:9-11 What conclusions can be drawn about our existence in heaven from this passage?

- Fully **conscious** and **aware** of each other, God and the situation on Earth. (Rev 19:1-5, Luke 9:31, Heb 12:1, Luke 15:7,10 indicate that saints are aware of what's going on the earth.)
- **Memory** of life on earth (also Rev 14:13). *"We will not be different people, but the same people marvelously relocated and transformed. Heaven cleanses us but does not revise or extinguish our origin or history"* Randy Alcorn
- **Learning** is ongoing in heaven (questions and new info)
- Aware of time's passing and are **eager** for the Final Judgment

We continue in this conscious, pure state until glorification day, when our souls are reunited with our resurrected body

On a day that only He knows (Mark 13:32), God will bring with Jesus ALL the souls who have died and are now in heaven and return to the earth. All believers, dead and alive, will at that time receive renewed, resurrected material bodies.

Read 1Thes 4:13-18

Read 1Corinthians 15. The main theme of this long Bible chapter is our future resurrection.

According to 1Cor 15:42-44, what do we know about our resurrected bodies?

- **Imperishable** – don't grow old, get sick, have decay (like Adam and Eve's body). Ideal age (~25 years?)
- **In glory** – our bodies will be more beautiful than any movie star. No scars, wounds, blemishes (Jesus' scars were unique)
- **In power** – strong – no weakness
- **Spiritual body** – does not mean "non-material". It means following the HS in all we do.

Other references to our resurrection (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; 11:23-24; Acts 24:15 ; 2Cor 5:1-4; Phil 3:20-21; Rom 8:11; Job 19:25-26; Is 26:19;)

there will be a final judgment, where our deeds on earth are judged for the purpose of distributing rewards.

Passages that emphasize final judgment

Rev 20:11-15 (Great White Throne); Matt 10:14-15; 11:20,22; 12:36; Matt 25:31-46 (Sheep/Goats); Acts 17:30-31; Rom 2:5;

Passages that emphasize concept of rewards

(Matt 6:20; 1Cor 3:12-15; 2Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-12; Rev 11:18)

“Even though there will be degrees of reward in heaven, the joy of each person will be full and complete for eternity...those with greater reward and honor in heaven, those nearest the throne of God, delight not in their status but only in the privilege of falling down before God’s throne to worship him (Rev 4:10-11).” Wayne Grudem

The Final judgment will be God’s ultimate display of His Roar and Purr! His holiness and righteousness (Roar) will be on display when he condemns unbelievers. His grace and mercy (Purr) will be on display when he accepts believers (John 5:24; Rom 8:1; Matt 25:34).

How should the reality of God’s final judgment effect us?

- Satisfies our inward sense of justice – all accounts will ultimately be settled by a just and fair God (Col 3:25)
- Enables us to forgive others and not hold a grudge (Rom 12:19; 1Pet 2:22-23)
- Gives us motive to live more righteously b/c there will be rewards (Matt 6:20)
- Provides a great motivation for evangelism (Ezek 33:11; 2Pet 3:9)

Then, for eternity, we live with God on the resurrected earth, called by the Bible the New Heaven and New Earth.

(Rev 21:1-2; 2Peter 3:13; Romans 8:19-21; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22)

“This is a picture of God’s ultimate plan – not to take us up to live in a realm made for him, but to come down and live with us in the realm He made for us...As Jesus is God incarnate, so the New Earth will be Heaven incarnate.” Randy Alcorn

Bottom line: Jesus Himself promised that we would be with Him forever (1Thes 4:17-18; John 14:2-3). Wherever He is, will always be the BEST place for us, whatever it is called!

Q: What happens to an Unbeliever when he/she dies?

A: The moment his physical body is no longer living, his soul and body are separated. At this time, his soul is immediately in a place of immense suffering the Bible calls Hades. He continues in this conscious, suffering state until his soul is reunited with his resurrected body for judgment day. At judgment day, he is judged according to his deeds with the end result that he is thrown into the lake of fire to spend an eternity of suffering separated from God. The Bible refers to this as the Second Death.

The Bible’s perspective about death for believers is positive! We can approach our own death with joy and not with fear

(Ps 23:4; John 11:25,26; 2Cor 5:8; 2Tim 4:6-7; Heb 2:14-15; Rev 12:11; 14:13)
Ps 116:15 *Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.*

Rom 8:38-39 *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39**nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus*
Phil 1:21-23 *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;*

Our attitude about death can be a wonderful testimony to a lost world. When our Christian loved ones die, there is sorrow mixed with joy (John 11:35,36; Acts 8:2; 1Thess 4:13). When unbelieving friends and family die, the sorrow is not mixed with joy (Rom 9:1-3).

How should we minister to those who are grieving a loved one’s death? Nancy Guthrie suggests these action points

Say something I’m so sad with you” or “I don’t know what to say”

Don’t be afraid If they cry or release some sadness. It’s normal

Do Something Don’t wait to be asked, just do it

Don’t compare Don’t compare their pain with someone else’s

Encourage moving forward Don’t push, but keep life in front

Discussion – What questions do you still have about death? Have you sufficiently prepared for your death? (Surrendered to Christ? Have a Will? Legacy Letters? Memorial service planned? Spoken to family members?)