

There is a great deal about the End Times and Life After Death which we simply **will not know** until, of course, we experience it. Also, there are references and allusions in Scripture which help paint a picture of God’s final plan, but it’s not always precisely clear to us what to do with the information. At issue here is that there is no specific journal of all End Time activity and there certainly isn’t a FAQ section in Scripture.

To consider the fundamentals of the Faith, we explore some very commonly held beliefs based on Scripture. But in all this we must remember what Paul taught us: For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away (1 Cor. 13:9-10).

With some degree of open-endedness to our inevitable questions, let’s explore together.

Life After Death

Death in both the Old Testament and New Testament is separation of the spirit/soul from the body. (Psalms 146:4; **Luke 8:53-56**; Luke 23:46; James 2:26). Therefore, it seems best to conclude that at death an Old Testament believer’s spirit went immediately into the presence of God. Scripture teaches conscious existence after death (**Genesis 5:24**; 1 Samuel 28:11-19; 2 Samuel 12:22-23; Isaiah 14:9-11)

The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ at the transfiguration argues strongly for the conscious existence of the spirit/soul of the dead Old Testament Saints in the presence of the Lord. Matthew 17:1

In the New Testament “Hades” (hell) is probably the equivalent of the Old Testament “Sheol” (Acts 2:27-31) which also sometimes refers to the grave, or (state of) death. The body of a New Testament saint sleeps in the grave awaiting bodily resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:14-15). The grave is a temporary holding place for the body while awaiting resurrection (**John 11:11-15**). The soul is separated from the body at death and remains conscious. Let’s read Jesus’ words together: **Luke 16:19-31**

Where is the soul then? There is no biblical support for the idea of “soul sleep” (the soul is suspended, sleeping, waiting) while the body of a New Testament saint is in the grave. The spirit/soul of a New Testament saint goes immediately into the conscious presence and blessing of the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:1-8**; Luke 23:38-43, 46). *Paradise* represents the presence of God (heaven) where there is conscious peace and comfort (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). *Hades* represents hell which is eternal separation from God’s presence with conscious torment and pain (Matthew 10:28). In the New Testament the word “gehenna” refers to hell and pictures eternal fire of torment for unbelievers (Matthew 25:41; Matthew 5:22; **Mark 9:42-49**)

Final Destiny of the Saved

All of the saved of all time are bound for heaven (a new heaven and a new earth). Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13 The final destiny of the saved of all time can be summarized as follows:

1. Eternally present with the Lord
2. Eternally in a state of peace and blessing Heaven is both the realm of the saints and in the presence of God. But because believers receive or lose rewards based on the things done while in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10) heaven may not be the same for all believers.

The Eternal State for Believers

For believers, the eternal state will be in a new heaven and a new earth where only righteousness dwells. God will purify and redeem the old heavens and the old earth with a fiery destruction and create a new heaven and a new earth fit for His redeemed order. Romans 8:18-21; **2 Peter 3:10-13**; Revelation 21:1. There will be no more conflict, tears, crying, pain, mourning, sickness and disease, night, sin or wickedness, death, curse, temple, sun or moon. Revelation 21:1-8; Revelation 22:3

What to Expect of Heaven

Revelation 21:22-22 tells us what will be present in heaven

1. Only believers (those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life)
2. God Himself
3. The Lamb as its temple
4. The glory of God for its light
5. Only righteousness

According to Revelation chapters 21-22 it will be:

6. A place of incredible beauty
7. Adorned with jewels and gold
8. Have river of life
9. Have the throne of God
10. Have the tree of life

The saints will worship, serve and praise God forever and ever and eternally enjoy His presence since they will be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:3

For saints will see the face of God and have His name on their foreheads (Revelation 22:4)

Saints will be like Christ for they will see Him as He really is (1 John 3:1-2; Philippians 3:20-21)

The last three chapters of the Bible (Revelation 20-22) reverse forever the effects of the curse and consequences of sin from first three chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-3). This is God's perfect plan of redemption for all His creation. AND WHERE WE SPEND ETERNITY- WITH GOD IN HEAVEN OR WITH SATAN IN THE LAKE OF FIRE- DEPENDS ON HOW WE RESPOND TO HIS REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN THIS LIFE!!

Final Destiny of the Unsaved

The bodily resurrection of the unsaved to eternal punishment is clearly taught by Scripture (Acts 24:15; Daniel 12:2; **Matthew 13:49-50**) Different degrees of punishment for unbelievers may be inferred since judgement is based on "what they had done" (Matthew 11:20-22; **Luke 20:45-47**; Romans 2:1-11)

End Times Beliefs

Second Coming of Christ

KEY TEXTS ON SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

- Zechariah 14:1-11
- **Matthew 24:27-44**
- Luke 21:20-36
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3
- **2 Peter 3:1-16**
- Revelation 19:11-21

These texts highlight the following aspects of the Second Coming of Christ

1. It will be sudden and unexpected
2. No one knows when Christ will return
3. It will be with great power and glory
4. The whole earth will know of it
5. Christ will come in judgement
6. It is Physical. Note Zechariah's reference to Christ's presence in Jerusalem in the Day of the Lord
7. Christ will defeat the enemies of God and Israel and subject the nations to Himself

SECOND COMING OF CHRIST THEN IS TO:

1. Fulfill prophecy
2. Execute God's wrath against sin as the righteous Judge
3. Subject the nations to Himself so He can establish His Millennial Kingdom reign on earth and reign over the kings of the earth Psalms 2:1-12; Philippians 2:5-11

Christ must judge the sins of His people before He can bring the blessings of the Kingdom. The eschatology "day of the Lord" prophesied in the Old Testament will begin with God's judgement and end with Millennial Kingdom blessings. Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-6; Zephaniah 1:14-18; 3:8-20.

Rapture of the Saints

THE UNIQUE EMPHASIS OF THE RAPTURE

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1. Christ comes in the air on a cloud to receive the Church
2. Dead saints are resurrected and receive glorified bodies
3. Living saints are translated and glorified without dying
4. All saints rise to meet Christ in the air
5. The saints will be with Christ forever

6. Some believe that the Church will be in heaven during the Great Tribulation on earth and will be spared from the wrath of God poured out against sin 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. This is not in agreement among all believers; see that 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 presents a different picture. It may be wise to avoid a particular view at all

It is obvious from both the descriptions and purpose that Rapture and Second Coming are two different events, even if they occur in sequence. (Note: probably for most Christians they refer to both by the same name, a minor nit). What's important to remember here, is that there is much we are not told in Scripture, by God's design, but we can trust His plan as perfect. If these events will bring Him glory, it will be glorious indeed, and we won't miss it!