

What is Death?

When a person dies, the physical body will deteriorate into dust in a grave or wherever it lies or, if cremated, the physical body becomes ashes.

For Christians DEATH IS ETERNAL LIFE!

For Christians, when our earthly bodies die, the person's soul and spirit go immediately to be with the Lord Jesus in eternal happiness. This is confirmed in Luke 23:42-43 while Jesus is nailed to the cross, *"42-Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." 43-And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."* The 'spirit' is the Holy Spirit and this is confirmed in Luke 23:46 when Jesus dies on the cross, *"Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last."* The Holy Spirit no longer has an earthly soul to dwell in and so the Spirit accompanies the Christian soul and returns to the company of Jesus and the Father. This is also echoed by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:7, *"For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."*

All human beings have souls, but only Christians have the Holy Spirit. Matthew 10:28, ***"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell."***

The good news for Christians is that, because of their belief and faith in Jesus Christ, they will receive new heavenly bodies that will be joined to their souls and Spirit and will last forever! Philippians 3:21, *"He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own..."*

1 Corinthians 15:51-53, *"51-But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! 52-It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. 53-For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies."* This is the first rapture of all Christians, living and dead, into their new heavenly bodies. The first rapture signals the start of the Tribulation period.

After the seven year Tribulation there will be a second rapture where people who came to know Jesus during the Tribulation period will receive new heavenly bodies and join their Christian brothers and sisters.

Then there will be a 1,000 year period of peace on earth after which God will create a new Heaven and a new Earth for Christians to live forever. Revelation 21:1-5, *"1-Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2- And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3-I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's*

home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4-He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." 5-And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"

For non-Christians DEATH IS ETERNAL DEATH

What is a non-Christian? Non-Christians are people who do not believe in Jesus Christ with their hearts. They have not repented to God for their sins and asked for His forgiveness. They have not, from their hearts, placed their belief and faith in Jesus Christ and transformed their lives from sinful to Godly living.

So, what is a Christian? The answer may be found in the following verses from the book of Romans: Romans 3:22-25, *"We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood."* and Romans 5:8-11, *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."* and Romans 10:9-10, *"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved."* The key phrase in these verses is *"believe in your heart"*. Your decision to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life must be a profound belief that Jesus died for your sins and that God raised Him from the dead. Anything short of this profound belief renders you short of God's Grace and still in a worldly state of being.

What happens to non-Christians when they die? The Bible tells us in Luke 16:19-31 that the souls of unbelievers go to hades where they are tortured until the Great White Throne Judgment which is recorded in Revelation 20:11-15, *"11-And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. 12-I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. 13-The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. 14-Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. 15-And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire."* Ultimately, those who reject God and Jesus Christ are thrown into the lake of fire where they will be tormented for eternity and they will wish they were dead.

What About Those Who Haven't Heard the Gospel?

I remember as a child about 7 years old on our farm. There was a single tree in the middle of a pasture about 100 yards from our house. I used to sit under that tree and think about God and even talk to Him. I didn't know about the Gospel, but I could see and understand that there was a God who created everything. I didn't talk to or worship the tree or the sun or the cows in the next pasture, I talked to God! Yes, I had been to church, but I had no idea what the Gospel was.

Doubters often bring up the topic about people who have never had the chance to hear the Gospel. "What about the tribesman in the remote jungle?" they ask. "He has never had the Gospel explained to Him, surely a loving God wouldn't condemn such a person?" they ask. Romans 1:20 addresses this situation, *"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God."* Let me add Romans 1:23 & 25 which says, *"23-And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. 25-They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen."* For the full text of this discussion please read all of Romans 1 verses 18-32. God loves us and wants us all to enter Heaven, but He expects us to honor Him and not idols. Even those who haven't heard the Gospel directly.

What About Those Who Can't Understand the Gospel?

This includes the unborn, infants, young children, and the mentally handicapped. God has a special affinity for these souls. Matthew 18:2-4,10 says, *"2-Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. 3-Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4-So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. 10-Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father."* and Matthew 19:14 says, *"14-But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."* Let's not stop here. Psalm 10:17 says, *"LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them."* Our God is a God of love and His love for children and the weak is not disputable. They will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

For Loved Ones Left Behind

God promises to bless and comfort those who mourn for their loved ones. Matthew 5:4, *"God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* The good news is that there is still time (today) for those left behind to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and spend a wonderful eternity in Heaven, if they haven't already done so.