



WHAT
HAPPENS
WHEN WE
DIE

A STUDY OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

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Introduction

What happens when I die is a question that everyone should research. For many this question remains a mystery, and a topic of avoidance. This pamphlet will serve as a short guide to help you find this answer biblically, as it is clearly defined in scripture.

Physical Death: The Separation of Body and Spirit

Physical death occurs when the body stops working functions like the heartbeat and/or respiration cease. It marks the separation of the physical body from the spirit or soul, signifying the conclusion of earthly existence.

So, I'm Dead, Now What?

I suppose as a Christians many sermons have been heard about the return of Jesus. He will come in the clouds, with trumpet blasts and riding on a horse seeking the bride of Christ, or the church. The second coming messages I hear often discuss defeating evil, judging humanity, and renewal, as we head toward the Kingdom Christ has prepared for us. Do I believe this, Yes, but what does that mean?

Questions You May Have:

1. Do I lay in state until the second coming of Christ?
2. If I am cremated or my body is destroyed/eliminated at death and no burial is possible, will that be an issue?
3. Do my family members come back and help or look over me after they die?

QUESTION 1

Do I Lay in State awaiting Christ Return?

The answer is **no**. The following scripture can guide us with direct answers and also through deductive reasoning.

Luke 16: 19-23 (NIV)

¹⁹ “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

We begin with this story and read about two who have recently died: 1) The Beggar; and 2) The Rich Man. Jesus startled those being taught with the story by indicating the Beggar was rewarded, and the Rich Man was punished. However, feeding the hungry beggar is not the only meaning and use of this scripture. Notice the Beggar immediately was carried by angels, and the Rich Man was being tormented in Hades. The Rich Man could also see Abraham and Lazarus. Notice there is no mention of delay. This is immediately upon death.

Luke 16: 24-26

²⁴ So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ ²⁵ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

Here the Rich Man cries for mercy due to torment. Abraham reminds him of good things in the lifetime already lived. The Beggar is being comforted, and again this is in the present tense, occurring right now. Now note that a great gulf or a great chasm has been set between. This means there is no going back and forth between the two distinctively different areas, or back to the earthly home.

Try remembering that God is not bound by time or dimensions. Also remember that Heaven and Hades are not in our dimension. God was outside of the earth when He created it.

Luke 16: 27-31

²⁷ “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹ “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ³⁰ “‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ³¹ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Isn't it interesting that the Rich Man has given up, and is requesting that Lazarus the Beggar be sent back to warn his five brothers? Abraham responds with they have Moses and the prophets. Neither the Beggar nor the Rich Man will get to warn those still in life. Clearly the Rich Man is concerned for family and loved ones. However, note that this viewpoint is past tense, and based on his memories from life. He does not see them from the present location or state, only in a memory.

Isn't it also interesting that Jesus telling this story knows that one rising from the dead will not convince these brothers. In fact, Jesus knew many religious leaders would not believe when He Himself would rise later in the story.

Answer to Question 1

Scripture is clear that the Rich Man nor the Beggar laid in state waiting, but rather were immediately in Hades and Heaven, suffering or being rewarded.

Scripture is also clear that the Rich Man being concerned could not have any messenger sent back to the earthly world to convince family, nor could he return to help them. It is also clear that a partition is placed between those in Heaven and Hades and the living in the earthly dimension.

Perspective:

Jesus is telling this story in a parable teaching. The parable teaches about the bad behavior in life and what occurs because of it. It also shows a reward, but boundaries are clearly defined and areas established along with timing. This has already occurred. It is in past tense with Jesus teaching from a firsthand account.

Additional Scriptural Support

Luke 23: 40-43

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ Jesus answered him, **“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

These again are direct words from Jesus just prior to his death. The answer indicated that today you will be with Me in paradise. There is no mention of waiting or laying in state while we await the second coming of Christ.



QUESTION 2

What about those that are cremated or their body was destroyed/eliminated at death, is this an issue?

The answer is, **so – it does not matter**. Many have concerns regarding this due to family burial practices. This should not concern you, as the soul is what matters. The following scriptures can help.

Matthew 10: 28. (NIV)

¹⁹Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Clearly the Matthew 10:28 separates the soul from the body. The two are not as one.

Psalm 139-16

¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

In Psalm 139 David is speaking of God seeing his unformed body prior to its existence. The implied indications are that David existed prior to his body. The two are different.

Genesis 3: 19

... “¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

-and-

Ecclesiastes 12: 7

⁷ and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

The Genesis 3 passage indicates the body was taken from dust and will return. Ecclesiastes indicates the body will return to dust, but the spirit will return to God.

Answer to Question 2

Scripture is clear the soul and the body are different. The body is returning to dust regardless of how. Essentially, if you are blown up or cremated the body just returns to dust a little bit faster than if you are buried in a casket. The soul / spirit is still returning to God immediately.

QUESTION 3

Do my family members come back and help or look over me after they die?

Again, the answer is **no**. Nowhere in scripture is this suggested. In fact, scripture clearly defines once this life is over and gone, you are gone and no longer in this time of space. The following scriptures will lead us.

Luke 16: 25-26

²⁵ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

Here again we visit the Rich Man and note the great gulf or a great chasm set between. Again, there is no going back and forth between the two distinctively different areas.

Job 14: 5

⁵ A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.

In Job 14:5 there are clearly known limits. This implies that the world and those living in it are not doing so in complete chaos, but rather in an orderly manner. There is a defined beginning and ending for everyone.

Ecclesiastes 9: 5-6

⁵ For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. ⁶ Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.

The scripture is clear on the common destiny that all will face. There will be no return of loved ones to oversee you or give gifts or guide you. They are no longer. They are not in control of this world, God is.

Lastly I wanted to provide a final thought and an answer to any questions that may arise from the appearances of Moses, Ellijah, and Abraham after their deaths. In all of the cases regarding the reappearance of Moses, Ellijah, and Abraham note:

1. There is no lingering or remaining behind. The appearances are short lived.
2. Their appearances are in a glorified state. Not a ghost or secondary body.
3. They are only sent for the confirming of Jesus, and there is no decisions being made or altering of the earthly world by the three.

Answer to Question 3

Scripture is clear that the linkage between earth and the living and the dead and afterlife is broken. There is a great divide between two. So your uncle, father, or mother are not watching over you after they are gone. Besides, I am sure if you really believed they were here looking over you, you would be disappointed that they didn't eliminate your medical issues or change your lottery ticket to a winner, right? The clear answer is God is in control, and as harsh as it may sound; no, your preceding relatives have no control over your life on earth after they are gone.

Conclusion:

For believers: I hope these scriptures provide clarity regarding any of these questions you may have had. If you are a believer, drive on and share this information with those that have questions or those that are not yet followers.

For Non-Believers: If you are not a believer and just flipping through the read, trying to see if any of this makes sense, there is one final question: In a humble voice I ask you, “What are you going to do about Jesus.” There is an afterlife, and you will enter it at some point. You can spend an eternity suffering or rewarded. That choice is up to you. It is so simple and free, it cannot be made any easier, He is knocking and waiting.

