

Where Do We Go After Death?

by Hugh Walton

We all, with tears and sad hearts, have said “goodbye” to loved ones and friends—some far too soon! Just recently, Amy Baswell Hall was taken by cancer at the age of forty-one, leaving behind, her husband Kevin Hall and her parents, Richard and Annette Baswell, and many loved ones and friends. Amy was a true asset, not only to her family and husband, but to the Lord’s church. She always put others before self, even at the point of death.

A number of years ago, my wife Ginny and I, along with our other two daughters, Melanie and Candy, buried our oldest daughter Wendy, only seventeen years of age, when she died suddenly in an automobile wreck on a rain soaked highway on a Lord’s Day afternoon. What Wendy Walton did for her family and for her friends is almost unbelievable for one her age. A number of people have obeyed the gospel because of Wendy’s efforts and the life she lived. And, the “dominoes” continue to fall.

Both of these young women loved the Lord and did His will, and I believe they “*died in faith... of whom the world was not worthy*” (Heb. 11:13, 38). But, where did they go, when they breathed their last? And where did your faithful loved ones go when their bodies were laid in their graves?

In Hebrews 11, we are told about many people in the Old Testament, specifically, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Daniel, Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. These all “*died in faith,*” as the Hebrews writer said...

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb 11:13-16).

The Hebrews writer went on to clarify what he wrote earlier in the chapter...

“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Heb. 11:39-40).

Wherever all those who have “*died in faith*” are, they are not yet in heaven. They must wait on all of us to go to the “*heavenly country*”—until the last day—and time is no more. Jesus told his apostles at the Last Passover Supper...

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2)

Jesus told them about the “*mansions*” prepared for them, and thus for us, in His “*Father’s house*”—in that “*heavenly country.*” But, if the ‘heroes of faith’ described in Hebrews 11 did not immediately go to heaven, “*but now they desire*” that heavenly country, then it would have to be known that the apostles also did not go to heaven immediately after death. And, Amy Hall, Wendy Walton, Dave Bradford, my Granddad O.C. Dobbs, Sr. and so many others I have witnessed who gave their all in this life and led others to the Lord, they have not yet gone to heaven.

Not even those heroes of faith, such as Abraham and Moses, and all other righteous souls that have died and have been buried, they have not yet gone to that “*heavenly country*” that God has prepared for them. But, rather, wherever they are, “*now they desire*” that “*heavenly country—heavenly “city”*—that God “*has prepared for them.*” Notice, he said, “*But NOW*”... as he writes... “they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country” that God has prepared for them.

I. But, the question is—Where are they now?

After Jesus had been crucified, died, and then buried on the day before the Sabbath Day, Peter, John and also Mary Magdalene, came to His tomb early on the first day of the week—the third day He had been in the grave. They found it empty. And, after Peter and John left to tell the other apostles what they had discovered,

Mary looked into the empty tomb and reacted with dismay...

*“But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘**Mary!**’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her ‘**Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’**” (John 20:11-17).*

Jesus’ body had been wrapped and placed in that tomb, and it was there for a part of three days. But, where did Jesus—His spirit—go? Jesus said, *“I have not yet ascended to my Father.”* So, He had **definitely not** gone to heaven.

John’s gospel letter was probably written late in the first century. It is certain it was written a good number of years after Jesus arose from the grave and ascended into heaven. At the time of John’s writing, **NO ONE but Jesus had gone to heaven.** He quoted Jesus...

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13).

No one has come down from heaven but Jesus. And, no one has ascended to heaven but Jesus. Yet, many righteous individuals from the Old Testament days—such as the prophet Able, from the first family on earth—up to the time of John’s writings, had died, and their souls had surely gone somewhere.

When Jesus died on the cross, He *“yielded up His spirit”* and committed His Spirit into His Father’s hands...

*“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘**Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.**’ Having said this, He breathed His last” (Luke 23:44-46).*

In John’s gospel account, he wrote...

*“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘**It is finished!**’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19:30).*

In Matthew’s account, he wrote...

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit” (Matt. 27:50).

Jesus’ spirit was thus committed into His Father’s hands—*“He gave up His spirit”—“Jesus... yielded up His Spirit”—*but where did *“His spirit”* go? We’ve already heard Jesus say, right after He arose from the dead, that He had *“not yet ascended”* to His Father in heaven.

II. Every man and woman has a spirit— Created in the image of GOD.

Going back to the creation of man on the sixth day—the last day of God’s great Creation—we find recorded in the first chapter of Genesis...

*“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in **Our image**, according to **Our likeness**; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:26-27).*

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (2:7).

The first man’s body was formed from *“the dust of the ground.”* But, God is certainly not of clay. Yet, we are all created in **God’s own image.** Jesus, in His ministry, declared the nature of God’s image...

“God is Spirit” (John 4:24).

Thus, God gives us all a spirit at our conception in our mother’s womb and that makes us *“in His own im-*

age” and gives us dominion over all the animals.

In the account of Job’s many problems, nine times his “*spirit*” is brought up. And Job said about the spirit in a man and in himself...

“But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding... I also will answer my part, I too will declare my opinion. For I am full of words; The spirit within me compels me” (Job 32:8, 17-18).

Unlike all other created creatures, the **spirit in man** gives him the ability to **reason and understand**, and then from that understanding, man is compelled to answer his part and declare his opinion. It’s the spirit that God has given him that allows him to do these things.

In **Psalm 49**, we are told that we are like sheep when we die—our bodies are laid in a grave. But there is a big difference—we have a spirit that will be redeemed...

“This is the way of those who are foolish... Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me” (Psa. 49:13-15).

So, the body of the dead goes to the grave and decays—“*death shall feed on*” it, BUT, “*God will redeem*” the righteous “*soul from the power of the grave*”—from the power of death!

Notice another passage of Scripture that gives us insight into what we are studying. In the Old Testament, Jacob’s wife Rachel, died from a hard labor giving birth to a son. Notice what her soul did...

“Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, “Do not fear; you will have this son also.” And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Benoni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and was buried...” (Gen 35:16-19).

When Rachel died, **her soul departed her body**, and her body was buried. But, where did Rachel’s soul—

spirit—go when it left her body?

“For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets... Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:5b-6).

Just as man was first created from the dust of the earth, when he dies, his body will decay and go to dust “as it was.” But, man’s “*spirit will return to God who gave it.*”

Man’s spirit returns to God, and also Jesus’ spirit returned to God when He died on the cross...

‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’

So, we learn where the righteous souls go, when they “return to God,” by seeing where Jesus’ spirit went for those three days His body was in the tomb. But, not only Jesus’ spirit, but also one of the thieves, who was penitent and defended Jesus to the other thief...

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:39-43).

Jesus said “**today**” He would be “**in Paradise.**” The spirit of the Son of God, during His 33 years on earth, had resided in the human body of a man named ‘Jesus Christ’—God in the form of a man—“*He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant*” (Phil. 2:7). But, when the Son of Man died, “**He gave up His spirit,**” and His spirit went to a place He called, “**Paradise.**”

If Jesus would pardon the penitent thief and take him to Paradise, then we should be assured that all the righteous who die before Jesus returns for judgment, will go to Paradise. As Jesus, our bodies will be buried, but our spirits will go to that temporary place of peace and rest that God has provided.

But, where is “**Paradise**”?

III. The realm of Hades—Paradise and Torments.

Consider Jesus when He died on the cross—He committed His Spirit to His Father—His Spirit departed His body and went to a place called Paradise—which was NOT Heaven where the Father’s house is located. Also, Jesus took the penitent thief, or the thief’s spirit, to Paradise with Him.

Paradise is one of two places in a spiritual realm called Hades.

Now let us look at the word, “Hades.” Hades is “an unseen place,” specifically, “not to be seen... realm of the dead” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). In the scriptures ahead, we will see the realm of Hades is divided into two places—“Paradise” and “Torments.”

Peter, in his first gospel sermon preached on Pentecost, after Jesus had ascended into heaven and put the plan of salvation into being, spoke by the Holy Spirit of David prophesying about Jesus...

“he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31).

Jesus’ soul was not left in the Paradise part of Hades, as the Father raised His body from the grave. When His body came out of the grave, His soul or spirit, left Paradise in Hades and re-entered His body.

The temporary Hadean realm includes a place for both the righteous and unrighteous souls. The righteous spirits are in a separate part of Hades called “Paradise” and the unrighteous are in “Tartarus” or “Torments”—a place for “the punishment of spirits,” which exists before the resurrection of all in the grave, judgment of all, and eternal punishment for the unrighteous. A great “gulf” exists between those two places, so no one can go from one place to the other.

Peter, in his 2nd letter, tells us about the angels who sinned in Heaven at some unknown time. They were cast down to Torments to await for the Judgment Day—

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4).

The word translated “hell” in this verse is actually “Tartarus”—“Torments”—and NOT the eternal hell (“Gehenna”) as found in other passages, such as Matthew 5:22. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* says of the translation of this verse in 2 Peter 2:4... “to hold captive in Tartarus... The Greeks understood it as ‘the place of the departed wicked’.”

Notice, “torments”, as Jesus called it in Luke 16:23, or “hell”, as Peter called it in several translations of 2 Peter 2:4, is a holding place where the unrighteous soul is “reserved for judgment.” Again, it is NOT the eternal hell, but it is a temporary ‘secluded part’ in Hades with fiery torments for the wicked.

The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* translates it correctly, as per *Thayer* and context of other Scriptures...

“For if God didn’t spare the angels who sinned but threw them down into Tartarus, and delivered them to be kept in chains of darkness until judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4 HCSB).

But, whatever the translation, one thing is sure... the immediate place after death is temporary—“until judgment” (HCSB) or “reserved for judgment” (NKJV). The Hadean realm will be until the Great Day of Judgment by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude also wrote about the angels and others who sinned, and he said they would be kept “under darkness for the judgment of the great day... and the vengeance of eternal fire”...

“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 5-7).

Their chains and their suffering in eternal fire will be both in Torments in Hades and in hell, interrupted only by the sentencing of judgment from our Lord, when all

are called before Him in the clouds.

Now, let's consider another interesting passage about both a righteous man and an unrighteous man who died, and where they went after death. Jesus tells us in **Luke 16** about a specific righteous beggar man named "Lazarus" who *"died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom"*—*"Paradise"*—and, an unnamed unrighteous rich man who went to *"torments in Hades."* Notice... he *"also died and was buried"*—they both died and they both were buried, but their souls—spirits—went to two separate places in Hades:

Lazarus' spirit was carried where Jesus said the penitent thief who died on the cross would be with Him that day—in *"Paradise"* (Luke 23:43). And Peter, in his inspired sermon on Pentecost, lets us know this place is in *"Hades"* (Acts 2:31). We put the two scriptures together for context.

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'" Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).

Regardless of questions about this being an actual happening, let us consider this: Jesus had the ability to see and hear whatever He chose. And, in this account, He used actual names—*"Abraham"* and *"Lazarus"*—except for the *"rich man."* I believe this to be an actual happening. But, even if some consider it to be a parable, they would have to concede Jesus taught the truth whatever He said.

Nevertheless, both men died and were buried, and the rich man's spirit went to a place of *"torments in Hades"* (:23) when he died, where he was *"tormented in this flame"* (:24); and Lazarus' spirit went to a place where he was *"comforted"* (:25) in *"Abraham's bosom"* (:22)—a place called *"Paradise"* (23:43) by Jesus.

This could not describe heaven and hell because it happened while people were still alive here on earth—and for many years thereafter.

There still has to be a second coming of Jesus and judgment, before anyone can be sent to eternity in heaven or hell—only after judgment on that Great Day will there be eternal reward or eternal punishment. Remember, the rich man was in *"Tartarus,"* with the angels who sinned, *"to be reserved for judgment,"* and then to be sent down to eternal hell.

The place of rest for the righteous is also seen in the following account of King Saul, who disguised himself and sought a séance from a woman who was a medium. We have to know God empowered this woman to see and say what she did...

"Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' And he said, 'Bring up Samuel for me.' When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, 'Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!' And the king said to her, 'Do not be afraid. What did you see?' And the woman said to Saul, 'I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.'" So he said to her, 'What is his form?' And she said, 'An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle.' And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down. Now Samu-

el said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” And Saul answered, “I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do” (1 Sam 28:11-15).

So, where was Samuel when he was “disturbed” by the medium? His body or form—“*an old man*”—came up “*out of the earth*” and his “*spirit*” rejoined and ascended with the body. He had to be in a place of comfort and rest, like Lazarus of Luke 16, because he was “*disturbed*” (necessarily from his rest and comfort)—“*why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?*”

We add to this the account of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration—

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid” (Matt. 17:1-6).

Notice that Peter, James and John were able to recognize Moses and Elijah, even though they had never seen them before. Just as we will be able to recognize Jesus, even though we’ve never seen Him before...

“...we know that when He is revealed... we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2b).

And, without a doubt, I believe from the context of these Scriptures, that we will see Moses and Elijah, Abraham, Paul and Peter... and all our loved ones who are there. We will all have a glorified and recognizable body, just like His...

“...we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly

body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:20b-21).

Now, let’s go back to our question under study... where did Moses and Elijah come from? It wasn’t Heaven. Listen again to Jesus...

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13).

And, even though their bodies are in their graves, the departed souls (spirits) are still living, as Jesus tells us about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... and thus all who have died and gone to the realm of Hades...

“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32).

The spirits are alive and conscious, just as the rich man was conscious in Torments—in part of the realm of Hades. Jesus told us about the rich man’s consciousness in Torments, as he wanted to get even a little bit of relief from the suffering he was enduring...

“he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

So, as we have now seen in the Scriptures, after death, a righteous person goes to *Paradise in Hades* and an unrighteous person goes to *Torments in Hades*. And there they await the second coming of Jesus and the judgment of all—both the living and the dead.

Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham, as are the heroes of faith we are told about in Hebrews 11—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Daniel, Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. They all lived by faith and are now in comfort, along with those courageous apostles, who all but one died preaching the gospel. That one, John, died in exile.

And add to those faithful children of God, our loved ones who counted heaven more worthy than this life. I’m certainly not their judge, but by their fruits they are

judged by their peers, but more importantly, by Jesus.

Now, they all await the coming of Jesus.

IV. The Second Coming of Jesus—the Resurrection of the dead—the living gathered up before Him for Judgment—Hades and death cast away.

Jesus told His apostles just before ascending to heaven that He has all authority, both in heaven and on earth. That authority was given to Him by His Father, as part of the plan of salvation. It's His role in this scheme of redemption to be our King, High Priest and Chief Elder.

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).

In the Revelation, Jesus said to John that He has the controlling authority over Hades and Death. And He will deliver up the dead on that Great Day. Then, He will cast “Death and Hades... into the lake of fire”...

“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Rev. 1:18).

John gives us further insight to what Jesus said in Revelation 1:18...

“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev. 20:13-14).

The realm of Hades will be no more—no Paradise or torments—after judgment. The places of Paradise and torments will be “cast into the lake of fire.”

Jesus said to His disciples that on that Day, He will execute His authority and raise the dead to “life” or to “condemnation”...

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He

has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:25-29).

Jesus is coming again! But, no one knows the day or hour when that will be, as Peter and the Lord warns...

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10).

At the second coming of Jesus, He will put an end to the earth and the elements in the heavens—the heavenly bodies and earth will be consumed with “fervent heat”—and “burned up.”

Jesus details the scene on Judgment Day—both for those “blessed” of the Father and those “cursed” with the devil and his angels...

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matt. 25:31-33).

First, Jesus will say to those on His right—the righteous—that they have inherited “eternal life”...

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... the righteous into eternal life’ (:34, 46b).

Then, He will say to those on His left—the unrighteous—that they have inherited “everlasting punishment” in “everlasting fire”...

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’ And these will go away into everlasting punish-

ment..." (:41, 46a).

Judgment Day does not mean the Son of God will then make judgment on those who have died—He already has made judgment at the time of their death. The faithful are carried by angels to **“Abraham’s bosom”** (Luke 16:22) in **“Paradise”** in **“Hades”** (Luke 23:43; Acts 2:27, 31). The wicked are sent to **“torments in Hades”** or Tartarus (Luke 16:23).

On Judgment Day, Jesus Christ will divide the righteous from the unrighteous—rewarding the righteous and sentencing the unrighteous—it is the time when everyone will hear their own sentences in front of all others.

Notice at the close of that account in Matthew 25, Jesus says it is either **“everlasting punishment”** or **“eternal life”**

“And these (the cursed) shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (:46).

Also notice that the punishment for the unrighteous will last as long as the life of the righteous—**“eternal”—no end!**

There is life ‘after death’ for all mankind, both the righteous and the unrighteous, awaiting the coming Judgment Day.

But there will also be Christians and sinners still physically alive on earth at the Second Coming of Christ, and He will come as a thief in the night—

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying

and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:35-39).

Those who are still alive will rise from the earth with **glorified bodies**, just as Christ had in the **transfiguration** with Moses and Elijah that we read about in Matthew 17.

In the transfiguration, Peter, James and John were able to recognize Moses and Elijah in glorified bodies. But for the rest of us, we have never witnessed that, and I can only imagine what those great men and Jesus in a glorified state looks like—thus what we shall look like. But, **“we shall see Him as He is”**—and we shall see others as they are—just as Peter, James and John saw Moses and Elijah. At that time, their body was brought up and their spirit was joined with them. And when that happens on Resurrection Day, we will see others, just as they are!

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).

Paul, in his 1st letter to the church in Corinth, describes that a person’s body must die like a grain of wheat in the ground before it can be raised in a glorified form. In other words, a seed is put in the ground, but when it comes up, it is in a glorified form—in full bloom for its Master’s use...

“But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body” (1 Cor. 15:35-38).

The time is coming when all of the spirits resting in the bosom of Abraham will come forth **transfigured with glorified bodies...** just as all who are still alive will be glorified also as they meet the Lord in the clouds. It will be a **Great Day** for those who have loved the Lord and done His will!

V. Jesus told His apostles about the many mansions in His Father's house—heaven.

“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

At the Last Passover Supper that Jesus had with His apostles, He told them that He had to go, but that He would *“prepare a place for”* them. And then, He would *“come again and receive”* them to Himself, and they would then be where He is—*“in my Father's house”* in heaven.

The Bible describes for us the nature of the place and the condition of the righteous who go there. The righteous will be raised and their bodies changed to be suitable for that spiritual place—

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:1-4).

Our bodies here face **mortality**... death is always lurking. Pain and suffering to some degree is prevalent in everyone's lives. But, we should look forward to this body being *“swallowed up by life”* and then being *“further clothed”* with a **glorified body of immortality**. And then, *“we shall be like Him”*—like Jesus.

Jesus allowed John, the last apostle to die, to see into heaven and to describe it for us in earthly terms. Even in this terminology, it is beyond anything we can fathom. But, when we are there, we will see it in all of its beauty. John in Revelation 21 reveals what he saw...

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusa-

lem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’”

“Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son...”

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.’”

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

“Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four

cubeits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21:2-7, 9-27).

Heaven will surely be worth it all! He that overcomes this life will inherit eternal life in that great place!

VI. We are also warned about eternal hell... we surely must not go there!

Back in Revelation 21:8, John interrupted our vision into the great new city, the heavenly Jerusalem, to give us a glimpse of who can NOT go to that great place, but where they will go...

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Hell is an eternal place *“which burns with fire and brimstone”* for all the wicked—even more than the sins just named by John. Paul describes it as *“flaming fire”*...

“...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day” (2Th. 1:7-10).

It is a place that both body and spirit will be together, to suffer in a *“lake which burns with fire and brimstone”*—like in the boiling white hot molten lava in a live volcano. And the body the spirit will reside in will not perish, but suffer eternally! We must fear Him—Jesus Christ—who is the Judge and can cause *both the soul and body to ruin* in hell...

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

“The word, *“destroy,”* does not mean annihilation, but rather, they will be *tormented in a ruined condition*. *W. E. Vine’s Dictionary of N.T. Words* defines it...*“The idea is not extinction but ruin...”*

Jude also warns us about judgment and those who will be judged against by the Lord...

“Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit” (Jude 14-19).

Hell is an eternal place for the wicked to be sent after judgment by our Lord. It will never end! The most horrible of all deaths would have to be burning up in a massive hot fire—anguishing pain that keeps burning

deeper and deeper into your body until you succumb. But, in hell, you never succumb! It just goes on and on with the burning pain!

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment...” (Matt. 25:41, 46a).

VII. Conclusion:

We should want to so live that we will be *“carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom,”* and reside there in rest and peace until the Lord comes and takes us to that *“heavenly country”* those heroes of faith looked so longingly towards, and to those *“mansions”* the apostles were told to tell us about... on a street paved with *“pure gold, like transparent glass.”*

But, some might be worried about going to heaven and ask, as was asked of Jesus by the Sadducees... what about those who have been married more than once and their mates died...

“Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife... will she be? For they all had her.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven’ ” (Matt. 22:28-30).

The Lord has it all perfectly planned, as only He with His power could. We will all be like angels of God with no problems of marital relationships—just enjoying being together with all of those great people and our *“faithful Creator.”*

We must commit ourselves toward being there, as Peter admonishes us—

“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4:19).

God is *“a faithful Creator”* who created us in His own image, and has *“called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”* Jesus came into this world to be the suffering Savior—the Lamb of God. He suffered a horrible death by crucifixion (Acts 2:23), was buried, and then the Father raised Him from the grave on the third day

(Acts 2:24; Luke 24:7). He ascended into heaven with His own blood as an offering for the sins of all (Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:11-28).

But, our hope doesn’t stop there with the cleansing of our sins through faith (Acts 26:18) and obedience (Rom. 16:26)—repenting of our sins and being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27). If our hope stopped with Jesus, then we *“would be the most pitiable”* as Paul declared...

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:19-22).

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2).

Because the Father promised to raise Jesus from the grave, and He came forth, then we know assuredly that He will raise us from the grave—both the righteous to life eternal in heaven and the unrighteous to eternal ruin in hell! There is no doubt! Amen! Ω