

A Biblical View OF THE END TIMES

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE? PART 1

Week #21; May 31, 2026, 6PM

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Review:

- This is (technically) Week #21 in our study series, “**A Biblical View of the End Times.**” However, to stay timely with current events, I have worked a couple special lessons into the mix.
- We had a special lesson on the conflict with Iran. More recently, we had a two-part special lesson series on UFOs / ‘aliens’ in response to everything that’s going on with that issue.
- Those sessions are on our website as well as on our YouTube channel. It is on our website that you can also find the lesson notes.
- Today, I am returning to the curriculum of our Bible prophecy series. We’ve recently completed five lessons on the Rapture, and we’ve looked at multiple issues surrounding that pivotal doctrine.
- As I consider the logical flow of things in this study on Bible prophecy, I now want to move into the question of “**What Happens When We Die?**”
- This will probably take a couple of lessons or so because I also want to unpack the closely-related issues of Heaven, Hell, and Hades. These topics are not well understood in the church today.
- We will also examine the subjects of our glorified bodies, the various resurrections in Scripture, and our rewards. I’m adjusting things a little bit as I go. As I said, I’m trying to accommodate a natural sequence.

NOTE: LET ME BEGIN BY SAYING - - - I’ve been the last person many people talked to before they died. They didn’t plan it that way, nor did I.

It came with the territory.

- I was once an RN in a Coronary Critical Care Unit, and lawyers, professors, doctors, businesspeople, artists, TV personalities, and politicians were my patients.
- So were drug addicts, felons, homeless people, and sexual predators. I took care of all kinds of people from many walks of life.

Many physical conditions and diseases are outside of our control. Cardiac disease is one condition that can be unpredictable.

- I once watched a very successful entrepreneur negotiate a business deal over the phone as we rushed to prepare him for emergency surgery.
- He died suddenly before he could give final approval to whatever transaction terms he was negotiating. We could not resuscitate him.

- He was truly a Type A without a Plan B.

As a clinician I used to say, “Death is the great equalizer.” No matter their background or their socioeconomic status, every person is inclined to say predictable things when they face their end of life:

- “I wish I had spent more time with my kids,”
- “I would’ve liked to have had kids,”
- “I should’ve given more attention to my friends,”
- “I should’ve been a much better friend,”
- “I could care less about my three homes, my five cars, and my financial statements,”
- “I now see I’ve lived my life for all the wrong priorities,” and so on.
- I’ve heard lots of **similar** things from lots of **dissimilar** people.

When one faces their own mortality, they shed the act.

- There is nobody to impress anymore.
- There are no schedules to maintain,
- There are no causes to champion, no goals to pursue, and no promises to keep.
- They’re worrying much more about their next heartbeat - their next breath. Will it come?

Death has confronted me several times in the last few years. I’ve lost good friends, former employees, relatives, and classmates. For each one, it was their “*appointed time*” (**Cf. Heb. 9:27**).

As I consider the question, “**What happens when we die?**” I want to look at the examples of two specific people in the Bible.

- These are actual people that Jesus talked about – and where I need to discuss a specific issue that is not illustrated with these two people, we will imagine somebody fictitious.
- I will keep our discussions on this topic confined to humans who die having been created 100% in the image of God. So – I am not talking about hybrids, like the Nephilim giants.

The two people I want to talk about are represented by the following:

1. **One who dies IN THE FAITH** (Here, I’ll use Lazarus in the parable of “the rich man and Lazarus” in **Luke 16:19-31**).
 - Many of you may be thinking of friends and family who have died – like Lazarus – “in the faith.”
2. **One who dies WITHOUT saving faith** (Here, I’ll be talking about the “rich man” in the same passage).
 - Keep in mind, this person will be an example of anyone who has died without saving faith, from OT times to present, and into the future.

A. First, one who dies IN THE FAITH –

NOTE: This is someone who dies having believed “*the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*” **I NEED TO STEP BACK A COUPLE PACES AND TAKE A RUNNING START HERE.**

- That's a phrase we toss around a lot in Christian circles - *"the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ"* – BUT, I feel many people have little or no understanding of what it really means.

NOTE: I feel there are times that phrase doesn't tell the full picture for some people, because it's become cliché. Folks say it without considering what they're **really** saying. Here's why.

- Because **"one who dies in the faith"** is one who dies believing that Jesus Christ is WHO He said He was.
- There are a few important things we need to capture with this:
 - (First): Jesus said He was God Himself (Cf. John 10:30) – *"I and the Father are one."*
 - Jesus was not just a messenger from God, but He WAS God! He was one WITH God; He was equal TO God.
 - (Second): It's through Jesus Christ **alone** that there is forgiveness of sins
 - **(Eph. 1:7)** – *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace..."*
 - (And "lastly"): Jesus Christ **alone** is the way to eternal life.
 - Here's the situation: Jesus and His disciples are having a discussion, and Thomas asks, *"...how can we know the way?"*)
 - **(Cf. John 14:6)** – *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"*
- Consider the "good thief" who died beside Jesus Christ. Jesus promised him that he would be in paradise when he died.
 - But the Bible does not say the "good thief" prayed a prescriptive prayer.
 - The "good thief" does not ask for forgiveness of sins, or for Jesus to come into his heart and save him.
 - And (GASP!) he is not baptized....(that's a different matter altogether, but I don't believe the FULL counsel of God's Word teaches that Baptism is necessary for salvation).
 - What the "good thief" **does do** is he asks for is a favor. He asks something of Jesus Christ.

IMPORTANT: It's in the nature and intent of that favor that we see the "good thief" expressing his complete faith (and here we go) - - that Jesus Christ was everything He said He was!

- The "good thief" asked that Jesus Christ remember him when He came into His kingdom.
- In other words, the "good thief" had full faith that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and therefore his only hope. The "good thief" demonstrated his faith even as Jesus was dying.
- And for that, the "good thief" received salvation. He believed IN Jesus Christ. He put his full faith in Jesus, and he placed no faith in anything or anybody else.

- This is why when the jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas answered him in **Acts 16:31**, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.”
- The only thing the jailer had to DO was demonstrate proper and full faith in Jesus Christ. (The passage goes on to say that Paul and Silas explained the word of the Lord to him. I take that to mean they explained who Jesus Christ was and that He alone was the path to salvation).
- Then the jailer and his household were baptized, NOT as a requirement of salvation (since we bring nothing to this supernatural transaction), but as a DEMONSTRATION of their faith.
- So, simply said, the jailer and the “good thief” - - - and anyone else who dies “in Christ,” all believed that Jesus Christ IS who He said He was.
- They all believed that in Jesus Christ **alone** is the way to eternal life > therefore, **they have escaped the wrath of God.**
 - **Romans 5:6-11** explains that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ will not suffer God’s wrath for his sin, because Jesus took God’s wrath upon Himself when He died in our place on the cross.

NOTE: It’s easy for us in our time to talk about faith with reference to Jesus Christ, and that He was everything He said He was, because we have the Bible. We have a rear-view perspective.

But what about the OT folks? What about the ancients that lived thousands of years **before** the redemptive work on the cross. THEY HAD TO LOOK AHEAD!

Hebrews Ch. 11 is the great FAITH chapter of the Bible, and it is chock-full of OT examples of people who had true saving faith before the cross! And **vs. 1** summarizes their demonstration of genuine faith as “...being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Their lives are outlined in this chapter. They each demonstrate myriad ways in which they placed their faith in God, in His works, in His Word, in His promises, in His commands, in His abilities, in His provisions, and so on. In all respects before the cross, they placed their full faith in God alone and in nothing and in no one else.

We must consider the truth of **Heb. 11:3** where it says “**By faith** we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”

- In other words, God is responsible for all of Creation. Believing that is a demonstration of FAITH.
- Not only is God responsible for all of Creation, but He made it all out of nothing (Latin: “*ex nihilo*”). In one moment, Creation was not there, and in the next moment it was. He is God! There is no one like Him!
- **Psalm 19:1** states, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.”
 - Creation, and nature itself, shows God’s glory and His greatness.

- Notice that these principles are in the **present tense**. That is, the heavens “declare,” and the sky “proclaims” the work of God. It’s ongoing – it’s a continual testimony.
- What we see in nature is meant to **constantly** show us that (a.) God exists and (b.) how amazing and great He truly is.
- That’s why **Romans 1:19-20** drives home the point that people can come to the threshold of a saving faith by first properly acknowledging the evidence of God, by glorifying Him as a result, and by giving Him thanks. That passage reads....

“...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

- In other words, God gives sufficient evidence of Himself in Creation for mankind to CHOOSE the right response. That’s why they are “without excuse.”
 - God is able to take over. He can meet people where they are at – just like He elected Abraham, or just like He met Paul on the road to Damascus. God is sovereign! We must not limit Him.
 - Look at all the stories of how Jesus Christ has supernaturally appeared to people in Iran, in China, and in other places where the Gospel has not been proclaimed. They are coming to TRUE salvation.
- I grew up on the mission field, and I’ve heard plenty of gravely, opinionated, and crusty old saints (but, well-intentioned) claim that God cannot reach anyone with saving faith without the verbal testimony and witness of another.
 - They quote **Romans 10:13-14** to support their case, and that reads as follows:

“...for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then can they call on the One in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?”

- I certainly believe we HAVE been called – and we have an obligation - to share the “good news,” and we have a key role to play now as we always have and will continue to have, but....
-we cannot let our views override the greater truth of Scripture. Think about Abraham and Paul again - - they were brought to faith without a human witness, and God continues to bring people to salvation in places of the world where the Gospel has not been preached.

Hebrews Ch. 11 concludes in **vs. 39** by saying, *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.”*

These OT people lived believing in what and WHO was to come. They demonstrated FULL faith in looking forward to the things that were revealed to them. But none of them were able to look back on the cross and on Jesus Christ as you and I can do.

NOTE: So that brings me back to talking about one who dies **IN THE FAITH**, and now I want to examine our example of Lazarus in **Luke 16:19-31 (READ)**.

- Who was he? He was a beggar. A very poor person. He was likely a real person that Jesus' audience knew of.
- Most importantly – somewhere along the line in his life, the context of the story makes it clear he had placed a proper saving faith in God.
- We are not told when or how, but we know he had nothing of value on earth. All his investments were in his eternal life – his life to come.
- The bottom line is we're not given much information about Lazarus. We just know he was poor, in bad health, and in all respects - - underprivileged and unimportant in THIS life.

QUESTION: Where did Lazarus go when he died? He went to Abraham's side (paradise, or heaven).

- The angels carried him there (**vs. 22**) which is likely what happens to anyone who dies IN THE FAITH.
- In other words, when true Christians die, the angels escort us into the presence of God Himself. That is a MAGNIFICENT concept – so pregnant with meaning and beauty!

This is a fact that is also consistent with other Scripture: Paul said of death for the true believer, that it is to be *"...absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."*

Paul also indicated this should be our preference in **2 Cor. 5:8**. I admit that I felt a certain pang of jealousy a few years back when my very good friend, Randy, unexpectedly died. He had gained the wonderful prize before me. I'm still here with my aching knees, a back that cracks when I sneeze, my fading eyes, and the responsibility to pay my taxes.

Paul also affirmed the converse principle two verses earlier in **vs. 6** where he clarifies, *"...we know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord."* So, if you are alive on earth, you **cannot** be in heaven. And vice versa.

But what happened to Lazarus' body when he died? (getting back to **Luke Ch. 16**). What happened to my friend, Randy? What happens to true believers when they die?

PART of the answer is their soul goes instantaneously into the presence of God. Paul already told us that. **But - - here's an important question: "What is our soul?"**

You are different than a prairie dog or a lizard. You have a soul. **"It's the real you!"**

- It's your consciousness and awareness, your eternal substance and true "state of being."
- It's your emotional and mental center, and the seat of your expressions. It's the part of you that placed your faith in Jesus Christ. **"It's the real and eternal part of you!"**

- It's what you ARE as opposed to what you HAVE. Human beings have a body, but they ARE a soul. In its most basic sense, the word *soul* means "life."
- The soul, the life essence of our bodies, is removed from our bodies at the time of physical death. It is the center of our **spiritual and emotional** experiences.
 - **(Cf. Job 30:25)** – "Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?"
 - **(Cf. Ps. 43:5)** – "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?"
- It is not unreasonable to think of your soul as referring to the real person, whether alive on earth, or in the afterlife. You can think this way since your soul is "the GENUINE you!"

The Bible teaches our soul is interactive and able to communicate with others, experience emotion, and it has form and structure (**Cf. Rev. 6:9-11- READ**). Here, we see souls can:

- Communicate audibly with God and with each other
- Make requests. Be intentional.
- Feel emotion. Be logical. Seek justice.
- Engage in worship ("holy and true"), and exercise patience.
- Wear a white robe (so there is 'form' of a sort)
- I believe all these attributes of our soul are what other believers like Lazarus, and others of the faith who have died, are presently experiencing in the presence of God.

But at the resurrection (this is at the Rapture), something happens to our souls. They are reunited with our bodies. But it's not the same body we have now.

- It's a "glorified one." It's a much more upgraded version of the one you have right now.
- Paul calls it an "imperishable" one in **1 Cor. 15:52** – "...in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."
- Right now, the body we have is a perishable one. It doesn't last. From the time we are born, we start the process of dying. For some of us it takes longer than for others.
- But the inevitable, the inescapable truth is, we will DIE! This body is a temporary house for our soul – the real US!
- Some people spend a lot of money trying to upgrade this temporary house. They tummy tuck and they face lift. They color their hair, botox their wrinkles, and throw in an occasional new joint - or two or three. (Some people may 'rust' more than they will 'rot'.)
- But none of that sidesteps the fact we are going to die in this body. Our bodies are a 'meat house' for our soul, but it's not who we really ARE.
- At the Rapture, the Bible says true believers will get a new body, we will be CHANGED!

QUESTION: "How does our soul differ from our spirit?" (This is a discussion point that frequently arises, so let me give you my views):

- First, I understand that some translations use "soul" and "spirit" interchangeably. That raises questions, I agree, and it naturally causes some confusion.
- But I do believe there is a difference between "soul" and "spirit" and I'll do my best to explain what I think the Bible teaches in its larger context:

- The soul and the spirit are the two immaterial or non-tangible parts of us.
- But unlike the *soul* which can refer to our whole person in this life or the next, the word *spirit* refers only to a certain immaterial element of us.
 - ✓ For example, human beings **have** a spirit, but we are **not** spirits.
 - ✓ Here's another perspective: Scripture teaches that only believers are spiritually alive while unbelievers are spiritually dead.
 - ✓ In Paul's writing, the spiritual part of us is vital to our faith (**1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1**). Our spirit is our element that gives us the ability to have an intimate relationship with God.
 - ✓ Whenever the word *spirit* is used, it refers to the immaterial part of us that "connects" with God, who Himself is spirit.

(Cf. John 4:24) – "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

- ✓ Watchman Nee's "The Spiritual Man." It's a book that is rather exhaustive on this matter, but it's completely supported by Scripture.
- ✓ **His summary:** Our soul consists of the "organs" of Mind, Will, and Emotions. Our human spirit consists of "organs" of Conscience, Intuition, and Communion.
- ✓ This is one person's "take" on these issues, but I think he has some good points to make. (NOTE: This is a good personal study to engage in.)

NOTE: Putting this all together – for me, anyways – people are soul-based. Here's a review of what we've learned:

- All people have souls, and those souls ARE THE REAL THEM.
- It's those souls which will depart their bodies (their house of flesh) when they die.
- For those who are unsaved, their souls will go "down" and for those that are saved, their souls will go "up." (more on this later).
- But their souls are **who they are**. Our souls ARE you and I in this life, **and** in the next.
- But as believers, we are ALSO "alive in spirit." Our spirit is the immaterial part of us that communes with God and has a direct relationship with God.
- It's not the same thing as a soul – and the way it is EASIEST FOR ME to think, my soul **has** a spirit which is made alive in Christ.
- For unbelievers, they are spiritually dead. I hesitate to say they do not **have** a spirit component, because if they serve the prince of darkness, their spirit is given over to Satan.
- But, the Bible calls unbelievers "spiritually dead." Functionally-speaking, they have none.

NOTE: This topic is worthy of a six-month study by itself (don't tempt me...), but again, I encourage self-study on this matter. Meantime, we need to keep things moving.

NEXT WEEK: We'll pick it up from here and ask ourselves again, "**What happens when we die?**" A fork in the road lies on the other side of **Hebrews 9:27**. After a person dies, they go in one direction or another, and I'm not talking "up or down" right now. While that's certainly true, I'm

more interested in dissecting the nuances. There are some important things to know about both of those directions. We'll examine what our glorified bodies will be like.



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Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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