

Every day thousands of people have the baffling experience of standing at an open grave, face to face with death. What is it like to die? What did God mean when He told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit? What did Paul mean when he said that the wages of sin is death?

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PERSON DIES?

Many answers have been given to this question. Some say that death only affects the body. Others say that death is like the state of unconsciousness. What does the Bible say? In this seminar we examine what Revelation says about death and the resurrections.

### JESUS HAS THE ANSWERS



Q1 **What experience did Jesus Christ, the Living One, once endure?** Revelation 1:18

A

Q2 **Why did Jesus Christ die?**

A 1 Revelation 1:5

2 Revelation 5:9

3 Revelation 7:14

Q3 **Jesus Christ died and rose for us. What is He called?** Revelation 1:5

A

Jesus Christ understands the resurrection for He has risen. His resurrection is of the utmost importance to us. He is called the "firstborn from the dead" (Revelation 1:5) because, although "in Adam all die, . . . in Christ all will be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22. (See 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.)

Q4 **What does Jesus Christ now hold?** Revelation 1:18

A

Jesus Christ said, "I am the resurrection and the

life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." John 11:25

### LIFE, DEATH & RESURRECTION

From His experience, and because of who He is, Jesus Christ can answer our questions about *LIFE*, *DEATH* and the *RESURRECTION*. Many insights are given in Revelation.

#### 1 About LIFE...



Q5 **How did life begin?** Revelation 4:11; 14:6,7

A

Life is not the result of evolution or accident. Jesus Christ is the Creator. He gave life. (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17.) We read, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7. (Compare Matthew 19:4,5.) It was never God's intention that the life He gave should be taken away.

#### 2 About DEATH...

Death has resulted from the rebellion against God that began in the Garden of Eden. God had warned that rebellion would result in death. (See Genesis 3.)

Death is an intruder into God's creation. Paul wrote, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12. We see the fruit of sin in the ugliness of death as it is brought about by accident, sickness, persecution, (Revelation 2:10,13) evil, (Revelation 2:20-23) war, violence and crime.



Q6 **Is death the end? What does Jesus Christ's promise to the members of the church at Smyrna reveal?** Revelation 2:8-11

A

Because Jesus Christ died and rose from the grave, death is not final. Through Him we are offered the gift of life. (See Romans 6:23.)

The fact that *DEATH IS NOT THE END* is emphasized by clear Bible teachings that are central to Revelation: (1) the *REWARDS* and (2) the *SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST*:



Q7 **When did Jesus Christ say He would REWARD people?** Revelation 22:12

A

Death is not the end, for faithful believers will be rewarded with a place in God's kingdom of glory when Jesus Christ comes the second time. (Also see Revelation 2:7; 3:11,12,21.) The Lord said, "For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." Matthew 16:27. Christ stated that He will "raise" His people "at the last day." (See John 6:39,40,44,54.) Paul stated, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:8. (Also read 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Colossians 3:4.) Paul

looked forward so much to receiving his reward at the second coming of Christ that he said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." Philippians 1:23. Paul was not contradicting His own words and the words of Christ when he made this statement. He was simply stating that it would be easier to die for Jesus Christ than to continue suffering in prison for Him. (See Philippians 1:12-26.) He was ready to receive his reward at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

If we receive our reward at the point of death, then the words of Christ become meaningless. The Bible says that the rewards are not given until Jesus Christ comes the second time. We are admonished to be ready for that day. (See 1 Corinthians 1:7,8; 2 Peter 3:11,12; 1 John 2:28.)



Q8 **The *SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST* is pictured in Revelation 19:11-20:6. Who will be raised to be with Jesus at the time of His coming?** Revelation 20:4

A

Death is not the end, for all believers who have died will rise to be with Jesus Christ at the time of His second coming. This resurrection will include some who have died as martyrs. (Revelation 6:9-11.) When on this earth, Jesus Christ told His followers, "In my Father's house there are many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:2,3. Jesus Christ taught that believers will be with Him at the time of the second coming and not before.

If the believer goes to be with Jesus Christ at death, the promise of the Lord that He will be with His people at His second coming is meaningless. If death enables us to go to be with our Saviour, how could death be our "enemy"? (1 Corinthians 15:26.) If death enables us to be with our Lord, then why does Jesus Christ need to return to be with us? Death is not the end. However, believers do not go to be with God when they die. The Bible says that believers will not be with Jesus Christ until the time of the second coming and the resurrection.

### 3 The RESURRECTION...



Q9 **What resurrections are spoken of in Revelation?** Revelation 20:4-6

A 1 The resurrection of

2 The resurrection of

While on earth Jesus Christ stated that both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected. "All who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." John 5:28,29.

Q10 **What is the resurrection of believers in Jesus Christ called?** Revelation 20:4-6

A

#### ***THE RESURRECTION AND THE REWARDS OF BELIEVERS:***

The resurrection of believers will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Note two points:

1 The believers who have died will go to be with God at the same time as believers who are alive, not before or after. All believers will go to heaven together. We do not go to be with the Lord one by one at death. "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him." 1 Corinthians 15:22,23. (Also read 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.)

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that "David did not ascend to heaven." Acts 2:34. The

faithful men and women of the Bible, including David, "were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." Hebrews 11:39,40. (Compare Acts 24:15.) We will meet our loved ones and friends who have died, at the resurrection.

2 The believers who have died will not see God if there is no resurrection when Jesus Christ comes. If Christ had not risen, and if there is no resurrection, "then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are *LOST*." 1 Corinthians 15:18. Death is not the end. But, neither is death the time when the rewards are issued. No one goes to heaven until the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection. The *REWARDS* will be given at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection. (See Revelation 22:12.)

#### ***THE RESURRECTION AND DAMNATION OF UNBELIEVERS:***



Q11 **Who will be raised in the second resurrection?** Revelation 20:4-6

A

Q12 **What period of time will separate the two resurrections?** Revelation 20:5

A

Q13 **Believers will be raised to life. To what will unbelievers be raised?** Revelation 20:13-15

A

We have seen that believers don't go to be with the Lord at death. Nor do unbelievers go straight to the fires of hell when they die, for, they are raised to life to face the second death in the lake of fire at the end of the 1,000 years.

## WHERE ARE ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED?



Q14 **Why are those who die as believers in Jesus Christ called "blessed"?** Revelation 14:13

A

**DEATH IS A REST:** Jesus Christ referred to those who have died as being in their graves. (John 5:28,29. Compare Revelation 20:13.) The work of believers who die is done. There is no work in the grave. (Ecclesiastes 9:10.) Those who have died do not praise God (Psalm 115:17,18) or lay any plans (Psalm 146:1-4), for on the day people die "their thoughts perish." Psalm 146:4 KJV. We read, "David rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David." 1 Kings 2:10. Solomon wrote, "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing." Ecclesiastes 9:5. Death is a rest in which all activity ceases.

**DEATH IS CALLED A SLEEP:** Jesus referred to those who had died as being asleep. He said to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.' Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'" John 11:11-14. (Also read Acts 7:59,60. Compare Daniel 12:2.) Death is a sleep until the resurrection.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THIEF ON THE CROSS?** Jesus Christ was crucified between two criminals. One of those men, in the final hours of his life, turned to Christ and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Luke 23:42. Jesus assured the repentant thief that he would be with Him in "paradise." (Luke 23:43.) However, did Jesus Christ say that at the moment of death the dying thief would go straight to paradise? Had Lazarus gone straight to paradise at death, only to be "raised" by the Lord to live again on this earth?

The punctuation of Luke 23:43 is the work of the translators and was not in the original Greek. In view of the fact that on the Sunday morning, three days later, Christ declared to Mary that He had still "not yet returned to the Father" (John 20:17), it would seem that the comma should not be after the word "truth" but after the word "today." Christ's answer to the thief would then read, "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise." Jesus Christ did not go to paradise on that day, and so the promise was not that the thief was going there on that day. Rather, the promise was made by the Lord Jesus on that day when He hung on the cross suffering for the thief and all sinners!

## DEATH IS NOT THE END...



Q15 **After the creation of the new earth, what will believers never again experience?** Revelation 21:1-4

A

**my**

**response...**

Because the resurrection, the rewards and our being with the Lord are dependent upon the second coming of Jesus Christ, John declared, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20. In contrast to the thief on the cross, John had followed and served Jesus Christ for decades. When he was a very old man, John wrote, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life." 1 John 5:11,12. Whether we have served Jesus Christ for years, or whether we have just committed our lives to Him as the thief did in his dying hours, we can have the assurance of salvation and life.



**Now is the time to choose to follow Jesus Christ. Are you ready for Him to come? If you were to die, would you be ready to be raised in the first resurrection at the time of His coming? What about your family?**

