

THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT






What Scripture tells us about the Last Things

FOR NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR, DIMLY, *but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*" So wrote the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (13:12). Scripture clearly teaches that all believers in Christ Jesus shall live eternally with God. It's hard for our human minds to grasp the Bible's description of that life - a life without sin, sorrow or tears, a life which lacks nothing to make our happiness complete. The concept of eternity likewise escapes us, tied as we are to the concept of time, to beginnings and endings, past, present and future.

Many things about heaven remain shrouded from our human intellect, no doubt with good reason. Someone once said that truly to understand the wonders and the splendors of heaven would be a curse rather than a blessing, for then we would not be able to endure life here on this earth. Nevertheless, our gracious God has given us glimpses of heaven in His Word. *"We walk by faith, not by sight," (1 Cor. 5:7).* It is therefore with a proper sense of our own weakness that we in this lesson study what Scripture tells us of life, death and eternity -- sometimes referred to as "the Last Things."

ICON KEY

-  Introduction
-  Important point
-  For further reading

Body and Soul

1. Look up Ecclesiastes 12:7. *What does the Bible say happens to the body at death? What about the soul?*

2. Read II Corinthians 5:6-8. Here on this earth we are "at home" in a body that is flawed and subject to pain. *What state, according to the Apostle, is vastly preferable to this?*

3. Must I languish in a cold grave between my death and my resurrection? Read Luke 23:39-43. This is the account of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. After the thief called Jesus "Lord," and asked for His mercy, *what did Jesus reply?*

"LEARN FROM ME"

4. Look up Matthew 25:31-46. *What will be the eternal future for those whose lives demonstrated faith in Christ? For those who led unbelieving lives?*

5. Refer to Genesis 3:19. *What is the future of every person's earthly body?*

6. Is there such a thing as reincarnation (living more than one life on this earth)? Might a person experience death more than once? Might there still be an opportunity *after* death for an unbeliever to be saved? *Read Hebrews 9:27 for the simple answer to all these questions:*

Asleep in the Lord

7. Look up John 11:11-14. This is part of the account of how Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. *Especially from verse 11, what does Jesus call Lazarus' death?*

8. Read Acts 13:36, part of a sermon Paul preached in which he referred to the death of King David. *How does he refer to David's death?*

9. Read I Thessalonians 4:13-14. *With what comforting words does this passage refer to the death of Christians?*

10. In I Corinthians 15:20, the Bible refers to Jesus as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." If Christ was the "firstfruits," *what does that imply about the rest of us children of God?*

11. Look up Matthew 9:18-19 and 23-26, the account of the daughter of Jairus. Once again, from verse 24, *how does Jesus refer to the death of this child?*



In the above passages, as often in Scripture, the death of believers is referred to as a "sleep." The point our God would comfort us with is this: for a Christian, death is no more to be feared than sleep. With the promise of eternal life in Christ, we may face the end of our life on this earth as calmly as we do our own beds at the end of the day!

The Resurrection of the Body

12. Read I Corinthians 15:42 & 53. *How does this passage describe the resurrection of the body? What do you think this means?*

13. Some think that they will have a different body (or no body at all) in the next life. *But what does Romans 8:11 say?*

14. Some think that only the *righteous* will rise on the Last Day. *But what does John 5:28-29 say?*

15. In Job 19:25-27, the suffering believer Job utters a remarkable prediction - that he would eventually see his Redeemer on the Day of Judgement. Especially from verse 26, *in what state would Job be on that Day?*

16. In this life our bodies are flawed, subject to imperfections, illness and injury. But read Philippians 3:21. *What will our bodies be like in heaven?*



Scripture makes it clear: on the Last Day all the dead will rise, both the eternally saved and the eternally lost. It will be a bodily resurrection. We will have our own bodies, though the bodies of believers will be transformed and glorified - without flaws or imperfections - just like Jesus' body was transformed after His resurrection.

The Judgment

17. Look up Acts 1:4-11, the account of Jesus' ascension into heaven. *What was the message of the angels to Jesus' disciples? What will we see on the last day?*

"LEARN FROM ME"

18. Read Matthew 25:31-33. *What will happen when Jesus returns to earth?*

19. *Answer the same question from Acts 17:31:*

20. Many religious people have boasted that they could predict the second coming of Jesus Christ. *But what does Mark 13:32 say?*

21. Read II Peter 3:10. *To what does Peter compare the unexpected coming of the Last Day?*

22. Look up II Corinthians 5:10. *What will happen on the Last Day?*

23. Read John 12:48. *What factor will determine who is saved and who is lost on Judgment Day*

24. Again, Mark 16:16 describes the determining factor for salvation on Judgment Day. *Who will be saved? Who will be lost?*

25. Read Christ's description of the Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. Especially from verses 40 and 45, *what makes the difference between good works and evil works in the eyes of God?*



In the above passage, as in many places, the Bible speaks of good works in connection with those who are saved. It is not the good works themselves which merit salvation (Gal. 2:16). Rather good works are the *evidence* of saving faith in a person's heart, just as evil works are the evidence that saving faith is absent.

"LEARN FROM ME"

26. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 10:28. *To whom do you think Jesus is referring in this passage?*

27. Read Isaiah 66:24. *How does the Bible describe the fate of the wicked?*

Eternal Life!

28. Look up Psalm 16:11. *How does the psalmist describe eternal life in this passage?*

29. Again, according to Psalm 17:15, *describe the experience of heaven:*

30. We may go through much pain and suffering in this life - particularly because we are believers! *But what does Romans 8:18 say about the comparison of this life to the next?*

31. *What does I Corinthians 13:12 say about our knowledge of God now, as compared with the next life?*

32. *Answer the same question according to I John 3:2:*



You may wish to read through the 21st chapter of Revelation. See how John uses the finest and most glorious words with which an imperfect language can transmit at least some idea of the wonder and glory of what God has prepared for us in heaven!

33. Read John 3:16. *To whom will God give eternal life?*

34. Some think of eternal life as a future reward, reserved only for those who do the most good works. But read John 3:36. *Who has eternal life? When does he/she have it?*

In the Meantime...

35. Read Acts 16:31, the words of Paul to the jailer at Philippi. *What should be our main reason for living as we wait for Jesus second coming?*

36. Look up John 8:31-32, Jesus' words to His believers. *What is a mark which identifies all true disciples of Jesus here on this earth?*

37. Read Revelation 2:10. *What does Jesus predict for the lives of believers in this world? What glorious end does He promise?*

38. While we await the advent of our Savior, there is work for us to do. According to Matthew 24:14, *what is one task we Christians should be vitally concerned with?*

39. *What "great commission" has our Lord Jesus given us in Mark 16:15?*



Additional Bible Readings

Consult Romans, chapters 1-6, and I Corinthians chapter 15.