

## At Death

### What About the End?

The scriptures say much about "the end." The Bible uses this term to describe various events, including the end of captivities and portions of God's unfolding revelation. The end of captivity in Egypt came when God sent Moses, as recorded in Exodus. The Babylonian captivity ended with the decree of Cyrus the Great as prophesied in Isaiah chapters 44 and 45 and fulfilled in 586 B. C. Jesus taught about the end of the Temple worship and sacrifices in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. However, the primary "the end" event will be when Jesus returns as He promised in John 14:2-3, and the angel spoke of in Acts 1:11. *"The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10).

Until Christ returns, many people die when their Spirit leaves the physical body. For these spirits, there will be a waiting period, *"until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren ... would be completed also"* (Revelation 6:11). Later in Revelation, the blessed condition of the waiting spirits is addressed. *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them"* (Revelation 14:13). The place for all spirits to wait for judgment day is Hades, divided into a place of torment and paradise. It is created by and maintained by Christ, who said, *"I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades"* (Revelation 1:17-18). Those who are "in Christ" receive the blessing, a spiritual life that lasts forever, regardless of what happens to the physical universe. While in prison, Paul reminds Timothy and us of the great blessing in Christ. *"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

Jesus spoke to a thief about going there as they both hung on crosses. *"He said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise'"* (Luke 23:43). Notice, Jesus said that both He and the thief would be there. The prophets said Christ would go into Hades for a brief time. *"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay"* (Psalms 16:10). The Hebrew word Sheol combines the Greek ideas of Hades and the grave. In (Luke 16:19-31) there is an example of this realm. Two men, one good and one unrighteous, die and go to Hades. We find the two places there, torment and paradise or comfort. Abraham speaks to the unrighteous man discussing the conditions of each area. *"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us'"* (Luke 16:25-26).

Some consider the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus just a parable. If so, it is the only parable to name one whom the Jews may have known. It is, however, the answer to the question, "Where does the spirit go when it departs the body." God's children are led into the place of comfort and wait for the final time of judgment. *"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). God predetermined that death would be the way to transition between earthly physical existence and eternal spiritual existence. Only two men have ever been taken

directly without dying. *"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"* (Genesis 5:24). *"And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven"* (2 Kings 2:11-12). Christ ascended into heaven only after He had risen from the dead and awaits there for the Father's command to return for all the saints, living and dead.

Speaking of Christ and the judgment, Peter told Cornelious, *"He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead"* (Acts 10:42). Peter again mentions Christ judging all in (1 Peter 4:5), and Paul emphasizes this to Timothy in (2 Timothy 4:1). Therefore, those dead and buried in this world will not escape the final judgment when Christ appears at the end of time. Paul wrote, *"For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God"* (Romans 14:10). The next question then is, *"When will the judgment take place?"* The short answer is, *"when Christ comes again."* We will look closer at this question next week.