

# What Happens After We Die?

Message 4 of 5 in the series: "Apologetics: the defense of Christianity through rational argument"

## A. As Christians, we should always be ready to explain the hope we have as believers.

"...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about **your hope as a believer**, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way." 1 Peter 3:15-16a (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** As believers, we should always be ready to explain our hope of eternal life in heaven with Jesus after we die. "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, **so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.**"

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NIV)

## B. Our lives in this world are short. Death is inevitable and often comes unexpectedly.

"When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, **so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.**" Romans 5:12 (NLT)

"Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone." James 4:14b (NLT)

"And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!' But God said to him, '**You fool! You will die this very night.** Then who will get everything you worked for?' Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." Luke 12:19-21 (NLT)

## C. After death, all of us who have a personal relationship with Jesus will go immediately into His presence, and we will live with Him forever in heaven.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16 (NKJV)

"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that 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 (NIV)

1. We will immediately be with Jesus. "'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.' And Jesus replied, '**I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.**'" Luke 23:42b-43 (NLT)

"We are confident, yes, **well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**" 2 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV)

2. We will be given perfect new bodies that will never die again. "For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing." 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 (NLT)

"When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting... It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. **They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.** They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies."

1 Corinthians 15:36b-37 & 42-44a (NLT)

3. We will never again experience death, sorrow, crying, or pain. "God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and **there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.**" And the one sitting on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new!' And then he said to me, 'Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.'"

Revelation 21:3b-5 (NLT)

4. We will be gathered together with all the believers who have gone before us praising God and serving Him together forever. "After this **I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language**, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!'" Revelation 7:9-10 (NLT)

**D. After death, those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus will be separated from Him forever and receive eternal punishment in hell.**

“Jesus said, ‘There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man’s table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. The rich man also died and was buried, and he went to the place of the dead. **There, in torment**, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side. The rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’ But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.’ Then the rich man said, ‘**Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father’s home. For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don’t end up in this place of torment.**’ But Abraham said, ‘Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.’ The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will repent of their sins and turn to God.’ But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’” Luke 16:19-31 (NLT)

1. Status in this world was NOT a reliable indicator of the rich man’s eternal destiny. In heaven, there will be surprises. **“But many who are the greatest now will be least important then**, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.” Matthew 19:30 (NLT)
2. After the rich man died, he was immediately sent to a place of constant torment. “...at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where **there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**” Matthew 13:49-50 (NLT)
3. After death, the eternal destiny of the rich man could NOT be changed. “...**each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment...**” Hebrews 9:27 (NLT)
4. After death, the rich man became very interested in warning his brothers to stop living only for themselves, but it was too late!

**IMPORTANT!** It is NOT too late for us to warn our family members and friends to turn from their sinful, selfish ways and surrender their lives to Jesus. “So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. **As God’s partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God’s kindness and then ignore it.** For God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.’ Indeed, **the ‘right time’ is now.** Today is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 (NLT)

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise (to return), as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**” 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

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**Connect Group Questions:**

1. When did you first learn about heaven and hell? Who told you? How did you respond?
2. Is it important for us as believers to be able to explain our hope of eternal life in heaven after we die? (1 Peter 3:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 4:13)
3. Why do you think the Bible speaks about death a lot, but we’re often very uncomfortable talking about it? (Luke 12:13-21, Romans 5:12, James 4:14)
4. Discuss the marvelous blessings awaiting followers of Christ after we die: (John 3:16, John 14:2-3)
  - We will immediately be with Jesus. (Luke 23:42b-43, 2 Corinthians 5:8)
  - We will be given perfect new bodies that will never die again. (1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 2 Corinthians 5:1-2)
  - We will never again experience death, sorrow, crying, or pain. (Revelation 21:3-5)
  - We will be gathered together with all the believers who have gone before us praising God and serving Him together forever. (Revelation 7:9-10)

5. Read the story of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke 16:19-31) Then discuss the following observations:

- Status in this world was NOT a reliable indicator of the rich man's eternal destiny. In heaven, there will be surprises. (Matthew 19:30)
- After the rich man died, he was immediately sent to a place of constant torment. (Matthew 13:49-50)
- After death, the eternal destiny of the rich man could NOT be changed. (Hebrews 9:27)
- After death, the rich man became very interested in warning his brothers to stop living only for themselves, but it was too late! Thankfully it is NOT too late for us. (2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2, 2 Peter 3:9)

6. Discuss the following quotation:

"If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for." Charles Spurgeon