

What about the life AFTER life after death?



Ultimately, Christians should be people whose lives are anchored in hope. Specifically, Christians possess the **FUTURE HOPE of BOTH LIFE after DEATH and in the life AFTER life after death!** This hope beats in our hearts (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*) and is fulfilled only when our hearts stop beating! Last lesson, we discovered from Scripture that when a person who is “in Christ” dies, his/her soul: 1) Is immediately endowed with moral perfection (*Hebrews 12:23*) – *no struggle with sin ever again*; 2) Is immediately ushered into the presence of Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23*) – *a presence FAR better than ANYTHING this present life has to offer*; 3) Enters the company of the saints (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*) – *in a perfect fellowship of full enjoyment with other believers and no relational downside*; and 4) Enters the promised rest (*Revelation 14:13*) –

while still active, because sin brings unrest and tiredness, we will enjoy “active rest” and our souls will be eternally rejuvenated! [a more depth treatment is available online]. The Bible’s afterlife affirmations fill us with hope and excitement. They all offer our souls (which are more substantive than ethereal) something they have never ever experienced before, something our current vocabulary cannot adequately explain. Such is the state of our souls after death. But what about our *bodies*?

The Bible is clear: Ultimately, the body and soul of every believer will one day be reunited and will live forever in a specific place **Revelation 21** and **Isaiah 60** refer to as the “New Heavens and the New Earth”. Before we consider the more-than-mind-blowing experience of “Life AFTER life after death”, some questions:

→ What will happen to this world / universe as we know it?

Malachi 3:2-3; 2 Peter 3:3-7, 10-13; Revelation 21:1

Is the world as we know it utterly annihilated, up in flames, or does the Lord God have something else in mind? What is the significance of comparing the end of the earth as we know it to the flood? In Revelation 21:1, “new” means “renewed & restored”. It will be this earth, but totally different from what it is now. The GK for “will be laid bare” refers to a piece of metal that has been made red-hot to BURN AWAY all the impurities in that metal. So the world does not “go up in flames” – the world passes dia God’s furnace which burns away all that is impure in the world.

The destruction is not burning this world to smithereens but as with metal in a white-hot furnace, all impurities, deformities, and corruptions on this earth will be burned away. In the days of Noah, the earth was NOT destroyed in the flood; the earth was wiped clean. The fiery judgment is not an incinerator, but a blacksmith’s fire. God will take the earth and the rest of the universe & heat it up and wring it out & squeeze out all the sin and death from it until all that remains is pure and glowing with God’s glory.

*Ultimately, what word will best describe the universe after the fire? The world will be a place of **Shalom** = (“peace” but not as in “peace, brothers!”) the way things OUGHT to be; WHOLENESS, everything rightly ALIGNED, compounded PERFECTION, the webbing together God, people, and nature -- ALL creation -- in FULFILLMENT, justice, and total DELIGHT and complete holy NOURISHMENT of thinking, emotions, and desires.*

→ Will our bodies go UP to heaven or will heaven come down to earth?

1st Thessalonians 4:13-18

What about the “rapture”? Really. It’s about neo-platonic philosophy infecting our view of the afterlife and Heaven! We’re affected even to our hymns, “I’ll fly away . . .” But we do NOT believe the body is bad and the

soul is good. We believe both body AND soul were created good, became bad through the fall and sin, and will one day be restored to that place emotionally, relationally, and physically of SHALOM.

*What is this “meeting the Lord in the air” all about? The Greek word *apantesin* **AH-PAN-TEE-SIN**, a rarely used word, is key here. (Cf Matthew 25:1; Acts 28:15). So what will we all be doing one day?*

It's not about the “religious” quest of “Going up to God”. After all, Xny is about GOD coming DOWN to us, Cf **Rev 21:2...** (a key distinction). The word means to receive and escort a dignitary to his destination. We will escort Jesus, the King of Kings & Lord of Lords, to a RESTORED earth! We do NOT “meet Jesus & leave” this earth; we meet and ESCORT the Lord back down TO earth! The word means to pick someone up at the airport to take them somewhere, NOT to get on the plane and fly away. [USM beat Ole Miss 1st time . . . escorted by highway patrol & Hattiesburg police, then welcomed & cheered by 100s, maybe 2,000 fans (the # grows) / When politicians are welcomed @ the airport & escorted into the MS senate chambers / Friend of mine who MET a CELEBRITY @ the airport . . . SO excited!] In all this, WE will be caught up in something INFINITELY greater than US! Heaven is the very absence of SELF-CENTEREDNESS. We will be “. . . lost in wonder, love, and praise...”!!!!

→ **When will all this happen?**

Matthew 24:36

No one knows but GOD HIMSELF! The calendar of end times is kept in God's “Top Secret” drawer, under lock and key!

*Why is that significant to our witness as a Christian community? When we set dates, @ best we become like “Chicken Little” and lose credibility; and worse, we're thrown (figuratively speaking, but in people's minds) into the same psycho barrel as the guy who wrote **88 reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988**: The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hash-Ana) September, 11-12-13 [Whisenant Edgar C] and Harold Camping. [Several people called . . .] Camping **predicted** that Jesus Christ would return to Earth on ... (with alleged Biblical evidence pointing to **the date for the Rapture as May 21, In May 2012**. This reflects poorly on the BIBLE (make it say anything) and on those who evidently think they possess GOD's knowledge of end times! [It makes for a more positive disposition when we can say “I got off the ‘planning committee’ and got ON the ‘welcoming committee’!”]*

ALL WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT “THE LIFE AFTER LIFE AFTER DEATH” -- From Revelation 21-22

1. Life in the New Heavens and the New Earth will have notable ABSENCES.

22:1, “. . . *no sea . . .* “ = a symbol of evil and restlessness. Not a literal sea. God MADE the sea to team with life and to be a place of enjoyment. The beautiful oceans will remain, glorious and w/NO pollution! Swim with the dolphins AND the sharks (maybe they become vegetarians, or Presbyterians!)

21:4, *no tears, death, mourning, crying or pain*. No need for funeral homes, cemeteries, clinics, or hospitals [NOT no dentists or drs!]. The reason for their existence has been done away with. SIN is the ultimate cause of . . . No sin, no . . .

21:3; 22:5, *no NEED for the sun, moon, & stars . . .* b/c the GLORY OF GOD will illuminate everything and there will be no nighttime there.

WHAT is EMPHASIZED in Revelation 21:3, 22? There's *No church-house in Heaven!* B/C of what Jesus did for us on earth, in Heaven, we now have direct access to God! Heaven is one big mass of God's glory! Every square inch of the New Heavens & the New Earth is holy ground where God's presence is free, open,

and ubiquitous. You don't have to ever ask "Where's God?" He's there in the fullness of His being! "find" God.

2. Life in the New Heavens and the New Earth will have NATURE.

21:10; 22:1-3 . . . There's mountains and rivers full of pure water, and trees, and what is there is THERAPEUTIC in nature. Nature is no longer at odds with itself but there is peaceful co-existence and all creatures shall exist for their mutual benefit. *Isaiah 11:6, [New Living Translation](#) In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion...*

What we will REALLY notice is how OUR "nature" has changed! Fully human, awake to what it means physically, emotionally, and relationally in God's image, imperishable, shining and glorious inside and out. **1 Corinthians 15:42-44** . . . We get some hints from Jesus' miracles . . . restoration of the created order so people are not blind or lame or mute or plagued with diseased bodily conditions. We also get some hints regarding JESUS resurrection body which shone w/a bright light, could pass through walls, walk & visit and eat w/people, and could go airborne. In the NEW heavens and the NEW earth, our bodies will NOT experience the limitations we have on earth right now. **22:4**, And we will go on learning and possession more and more knowledge about God, and all the knowledge will be transformative and we will be transformed from glory to greater glory, forever!

3. Life in the New Heavens and the New Earth will have CULTURE.

21:2, 10-27; 22:1-2, Jerusalem = a CITY. "Urban" doesn't have to be a bad word! There's an URBAN aspect to Heaven, also. Perfect city, landscaped to perfection, a garden-city. There's culture & commerce, art & music, politics, communal activity, all perfect, without sin, all TOTALLY devoted to God. [Not "politics as usual" which is acrimonious faultfinding, finger pointing, blaming, trying to destroy the opposition, and devoted to THEMSELVES first and foremost.] EVERYTHING promotes SHALOM and brings GLORY to God and builds people up, ALWAYS. EVERYTHING is positive, in the most positive sense of the word! No one will EVER feel torn down.

4. Life in the New Heavens and the New Earth will have GOD-WITH-US.

21:3, this is going from "far better" to "best"! God with us COMPLETES the story of the Bible. And it's for all eternity. The Complete, perfect, unmitigated, unqualified, unfiltered glory of God filling ALL of the heavens and earth and filling US. Now that's the mind-blowing reality of the New Heavens & the New Earth! Heaven will be the perfect place of God's presence, and we will be ravished by the glory, presence, and beauty of God. We will finally experience the FULLNESS OF LIFE that can only come in an environment where God is completely and totally present with us and within us! Cf *Psalm 16:11*, ". . . **in your presence is FULLNESS of Joy!**" The comfort of God's presence is beyond description! Yet it is what we long for in the deepest part of who we are (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*). HEAVEN, THE PLACE WHERE GOD'S PRESENCE FILLS US, IS OUR TRUE HOME. This is what fills us with joy we have never felt before but will always feel. This is what will cover us from head to toes with glorious goose bumps . . . forever!

"...the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before." -- C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*

Friends, that's HEAVEN!

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