



# The Good News

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## ***What happens when we die?***

By Michael McCleary

This age-old question has surely been asked by man since God cast him out of the Garden. There are thousands of books that posit different theories. There have been entire civilizations, such as the Egyptians, that have been obsessed with death and figuring out what happens after death. While we cannot explain every single step, God has seen fit to provide us with some information on what happens when we die.

**The “parable” of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16:19-31:** Many have tried to explain away this “parable” of Jesus as simply being a story that is not based in reality. If this is true, not only is it the first time Jesus did such a thing, but it would also make the case that Jesus was not being honest. Every parable that Jesus taught had a basis in reality. To be consistent with the Scriptures, we must believe that what Jesus taught here is based in the reality of life and death. Jesus describes a rich man, who was not a servant of God but rather seemed to have put all his trust in riches. Jesus also describes a man named Lazarus, who was a beggar but put his faith in God. When Lazarus died, angels came and took him to “Abraham’s bosom”, a place of complete comfort and peace. When the rich man died, he found himself in a place of torment and fire. While there are plenty of lessons and applications to make from this teaching of the Lord, what we find is that when the faithful of the Lord pass from this life, angels come and take the spirit to a place that is wonderful and serene as they wait for the Judgment Day. How comforting to look forward to angels attending to us at death!

**“Paradise” found, Luke 23:43:** As Jesus was hanging on the cross, the thieves who were hanging on His left and right mocked Him. However, at some point, one of the thieves allowed reality to set in, admonished the other thief for mocking the Lord, and said to Jesus “*Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.*” Jesus’ response to the thief? *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* Paradise...what a wonderful word. It evokes all sorts of wonderful images in our imaginations. And without a doubt, this place is a place of peace, comfort, and beauty. All those whom the Lord deems worthy will be allowed to enter this wonderful place. Jesus was given the authority to grant salvation, and He did so for the penitent thief. Now, since the establishment of the New Covenant, Jesus grants salvation through His blood to all who will be faithful and obedient. How comforting to look forward to Paradise after death!

**The “alarm clock” for the dead, I Cor. 15:50-53:** The apostle Paul describes for us what will happen on the Last Day when Jesus returns to redeem all those who are His and judge the world. He makes the case that the physical body cannot go to Heaven, as Heaven is a spiritual realm. When Jesus re-

turns, *“we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* Imagine the sound of a trumpet the world over! Imagine a trumpet so loud and joyous that it wakes the dead! God’s power is infinite. It will not matter if a person was cremated and their ashes spread to the wind, or if their bones have turned to dust. God is able to make them whole again. And in that moment, their bodies will be changed from physical to spiritual, to enable the faithful of the Lord to be received up into Heaven after Judgment. What a wonderful “alarm clock” we await!

**Therefore, do not sorrow as others who have no hope, I Thess. 4:13-18:** When we lose a loved one to death, it is always difficult. No matter how old or young they were, no matter how sick or well, the death of a loved one is traumatic and emotional. However, if our loved one was a faithful servant of God, we need not “*sorrow as others who have no hope*”. Paul says *“I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”* How wonderful to be comforted by the words of the apostle, knowing that if our loved one was a faithful servant of God, they will rise from the dead and meet the Lord in the air. And if we are still alive at the coming of the Lord, we will meet the Lord, and our loved ones, in the air, and, after Judgment, we will be with the Lord and our loved ones in Heaven forever.

How blessed we are that our God cares for us so much as to tell us what will happen after we die! Death is truly not to be feared if we are faithfully obeying the Lord’s commands! For our Lord will make sure we, and our loved ones, are taken care of after death! May we be comforted and at peace regarding those who have “fallen asleep” in the Lord; and may we not fear for them, or for ourselves. For our Lord conquered death, and through His power, all the faithful will conquer it as well. *“Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”* (I Cor. 15:54-55)