

Death, Thenceforth, and Thereafter

There are many leaders in religion, who claim that no one knows what will happen to people after they die. But in His Holy Scripture, God has said many things on this subject. This document is an attempt to summarize the things on this subject which God has said.

In reading the below, it is important to know that in a great many translations of the Bible, even the King James and New International Versions, there are omissions and mistranslations on this subject. These exist because many things God has said on this subject are very embarrassing for many, especially human beings who care more for the opinions of certain other human beings, than they do for God.

A most significant issue is "Sheol": it is a Hebrew word, which is often mistranslated to "grave". A thorough study reveals something different: it should be "Hades". Hades, in Greek and Roman language, was a place of all of the dead. There is a word for this place in every ancient language; the word "Hel" is old Anglo-Saxon for it, and it is where the modern "Hell" comes from, but the Hebrew and other ancient languages described very differently than today's concept of a place of fiery torture ruled by a red guy with horns.

In order to avoid this problem, the translation used below is the English Standard Version (ESV). This was chosen according to maximum quality for each verse, in order that the words that God Personally said, and words He has quoted of His most holy men, shall be read, as much as we can.

Before the Messiah, the Christ

God recorded the following events for us concerning the times before He sent the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who is Christ the Lord:

A. God sent some directly, from the world to Himself. They never died.

Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Genesis 5:22-24

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.

...

And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2 Kings 2:1...11

B. God sent some directly, while still alive, downward into the earth, into a place called "Sheol" in Hebrew, and "Hades" in Greek.

But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

Numbers 16:30-33

C. Many others were sent to Sheol after death.

Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

Ecclesiastes 9:9-10

D. Sheol is a place of entrapment, of bondage. It is a place where proud men, those who love their own words and their own works, are humbled.

...the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

2 Samuel 22:6

For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. Selah

Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.

Psalms 49:10-14

And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Matthew 11:23

E. In Sheol, some remember nothing, at all.

For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?

Psalms 6:5

F. Some in Sheol suffer torment. Others are in a part of it called "Abraham's side".

"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

Luke 16:19-23

F. God promised to not forever leave holy people in Sheol. He promised to one day redeem them from it.

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah

Psalms 49:15

Since the Coming of the Messiah, the Christ

God has recorded the following for us concerning the current times, which are after He sent His Messiah Jesus to us:

A. The Lord Himself willingly died, and went down into the earth, and then afterwards came back up, and was taken up to His Father in Heaven.

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.
John 10:17-18

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.
Acts 2:29-31

...she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"
John 20:14-17

B. The Father in Heaven has given the Lord Jesus the keys to, the power over, Hades (Sheol).

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."
Revelation 1:17-18

C. The Lord Jesus has stated that if anyone eats of His flesh and drink of His blood, which means if anyone believes into Him, he or she will not die. There is also a statement at the end of the same discussion, in which He states that He will raise people "up", "on the last day". In other words, they may well go down; but if so, He will raise them up.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."
John 3:16-21

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."
John 6:47-50

"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."
John 6:54

D. The Lord Jesus promised a certain penitent man of faith and penitence, who was being crucified next to Him, that he would be taken up to Paradise that very day. Not "the last day", but that very day.

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke 23:39-43

E. One longtime friend of a certain Apostle was taken up directly to Paradise. The Apostle confessed that he did not know whether or not his friend was taken up in physical form or merely in soul and spirit.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows -- and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

F. There are persons who die, who are called dead "in Christ". These will be raised by the Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns. After this, the people of God who live in the world will be taken to Him as well, to stay, forever.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

G. The Lord has laid a foundation for all humankind, composed of the many things He has commanded in the new covenant between God and humankind, which is recorded in the New Testament. If a man attempts to build stuff of this world on this foundation, rather than the Kingdom of Heaven, he will be saved – but he will suffer before he reaches heaven.

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

H. The Lord has stated that anyone who does not forgive his brother for all offenses, shall be imprisoned by the Father in Heaven, until forgiveness is given.

Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Matthew 18:32-35

I. There shall come a time when the Lord will call many to an event called the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb". His Church -- comprising all people who truly desire to love Him and do the things He has asked -- is discussed as the bride, and He as the bridegroom. Many shall come to and remain at this wedding; but many shall not, and the ones that shall not, will be cast into a place called "Outer Darkness".

"...I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 8:5-12

J. One day, God will destroy this world and everything in it. Immediately before this, He will raise all of the dead from Sheol. All will be judged according to their works. Death and Hades will both be cast into the Lake of Fire. And all those whose names are not written in the Book of Life shall also be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Matthew 24:30-35

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken--that is, things that have been made--in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:25-29

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15