

BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS

Resurrection and Judgement

When you have read this article you will know the answers to these questions:

1. What does the Bible say about immortality (living for ever)?
2. What happens to us when we die?
3. When will the resurrection of the dead take place?
4. Who will be judged by Jesus Christ, and why?

Many people believe that when they die, an immortal soul inside them will go to heaven.

The Bible tells a very different story. It talks about people who “may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:11, New King James Version).

They also “must appear before the judgement seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10). God will raise the dead and judge them. Faithful followers of Jesus Christ will live forever with him.

1. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IMMORTALITY?

The word “immortal” is used only once, and “immortality” just five times in the Bible. When we look at all the passages where they are used, we learn:

- a) Only God has always lived and will always live (1 Timothy 1:17).
- b) Man is never included in any reference to having immortality now (1 Timothy 6:16).
- c) Jesus Christ has “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

This means that there was no immortality for man before Jesus came. So, man could not have had an immortal soul from the beginning. Our hope of immortality entirely depended on the victory of Jesus Christ over sin. Only since his resurrection to everlasting life has this become possible for us. For the faithful, that will only be by God’s grace, when Jesus returns to raise the dead. Immortality was not built into us.

d) We must “seek for glory, honour and immortality” (Romans 2:7). If we have to seek for immortality, it cannot already be within us. The day is coming when “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (verse 16).

Eternal life is “the gift of God”, not the right of man (Romans 6:23).

e) The Bible talks about kinds of bodies. There is “a natural body” and “a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). The spiritual body is not part of the natural one. Paul tells us “this mortal must put on immortality” (verse 53).

A change of nature is needed. That will happen when “this mortal has put on immortality”. Then (and only then), “Death is swallowed up in victory”(verse 54). This teaching is the exact opposite of the common view that the body is “put off” to free the immortal soul within. That idea is not found in the Bible. For those aware of God’s purpose, the Bible gives us this important order of events:

- i) We now have a natural life in a natural body.
- ii) Sooner or later, we shall die.
- iii) Jesus will return to raise us from the dead.
- iv) We shall be judged by him.
- v) We shall either be given a spiritual body, and everlasting life, or we shall die for ever.

If Jesus comes before we die, he will judge us with the responsible people living at that time.

The Bible says nothing, anywhere, about human beings having “immortal souls”. It always talks about the body being raised from the dead.

2. WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?

The Bible often calls death, “a sleep”. In the story of Lazarus (John 11), Jesus said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him ... However, Jesus spoke of his death ... Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead’ ” (verses 11-14). Why did Jesus use the word “sleep”? Because when we are asleep, we know nothing until we wake up. The Bible says the same thing about death: “In death there is no remembrance of you” (Psalm 6:5). Lazarus had been dead for four days before Jesus raised him (John 11:39). If his soul had been in heaven during this time, Lazarus could have told people about his experiences. But he said nothing. He could not talk about “out-of-the body experiences”, because he did not have any. His silence shouts out this message: Lazarus was simply “asleep” in the

grave, knowing nothing. No part of Lazarus went anywhere. Our hope for the future must be the same as Martha's. She believed that we "will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (verse 24).

3. WHEN WILL THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD TAKE PLACE?

The resurrection will take place when Jesus Christ returns to the earth to set up God's kingdom (Luke 1:32,33). Jesus says: "Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). The Apostle Paul says: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive ... Christ the first-fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22,23).

Jesus and the Apostle Paul are in perfect agreement about:

- a) The truth of the resurrection from the dead, and
- b) When it will take place.

They know best. Don't believe anyone who tells you a different story.

4. WHO WILL BE JUDGED BY JESUS CHRIST, AND WHY?

The Bible tells us that many people will be judged when Jesus comes. Paul says: "The Lord Jesus Christ ... will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).

Responsible people are those who know about God. They "shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ ... that each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10,12). If Jesus has not yet returned to judge, how can anyone already be enjoying everlasting life?

Not all responsible people will be saved. Jesus told some people that they will "see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28).

Thankfully, to those who have tried to serve him well, Jesus will say: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

People who have never known about God will not be raised for judgement. They are not responsible to Him. Daniel tells us: "Many (but not all) of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2).

Why will there be a judgement? because from the beginning of creation, God has given mankind a choice. We can either follow His way, or please ourselves. That includes you. God is pleased if we choose to follow His way. For those who do, it will be our "Father's good pleasure" to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

Surely, you want to be in God's kingdom? Faithful believers can now look forward to this wonderful blessing. God is going to send Jesus Christ to bring peace to a world in need. He will reign as king over the whole earth (Psalm 72:8-11). After the resurrection and judgement, those who are saved will help Jesus preach to the nations. He wants them, also, to learn about him, and finally have the joy of everlasting life. Do you know of any hope as great as this one? Christadelphians don't. If you serve God now, you will belong to Him in the day when "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying" (Revelation 21:4).

"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).