

## Our Eternal Form

In a **Bible** study some time ago, part of the discussion focused on what our appearance might assume after the resurrection. Since we are all to adopt some sort of form for our eternal existence, the **Bible** makes it clear that whatever shape or nature it will take, and wherever that form will exist, it will be there for all eternity.

Since the **Bible** gives examples of two births, two deaths, and two resurrections there must also be two judgments, since death in and of itself is a sort of sentence. Our first birth obviously is our physical birth. All of us after the time of gestation have experienced this even though none of us can remember having gone through it. Sadly though, countless numbers, and **God** considers every conception as a soul, have been murdered in the one place an unborn child should be considered safest. But for the sake of this lesson we will be considering those who have made it beyond birth into adulthood. Once an adult, obviously maturity comes in differing ways and at different ages, each of us must experience a second birth. **Jesus** said in Jn 3:7 "**You must be born again**".

**Joh 3:3** **Jesus** answered him (*Nicodemus*), "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (Gk.509- from above) he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" **4** **Nicodemus** said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" **5** **Jesus** answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**"

Our first birth, again, is physical. Our second birth, according to **Jesus**, is spiritual and is a must if we wish to "**enter the kingdom of God**", because...

**Tit 3:4** ... when the goodness and loving kindness of **God** our **Savior** appeared, **5** **He** saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to **His Own** mercy, by the washing (*Gk.3067- a bath, that is [figuratively], baptism*) of regeneration (*Gk.3824- [spiritual] rebirth*) and renewal of the **Holy Spirit**, **6** **Whom** **He** poured out on us richly through **Jesus Christ** our **Savior** (*Act 2:38*), **7** so that being justified by **His** grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

According to the **Greek** scholar Thayer, this 'regeneration' has to do with "a new life consecrated to God" and is "a radical change of mind for the better". There is no other way in which **God** can qualify us "to share in the inheritance of the saints of light...[delivering] us from the domain of darkness [and transferring] us into the kingdom of **His** dear **Son**" (*Col 1:13-14*) but through "baptism" which "now saves [us]" (*1 Pet 3:21*). And it's only complete once having been 'renovated' by the **Holy Spirit**. Only through that process can anyone...

**Eph 4:22** ... put off [the] old self, which belongs to [our] former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of [our] minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of **God** in true righteousness and holiness.

Thus, baptism also has to do with our first death, burial, and our first resurrection.

Rom 6:4 We were **buried** therefore with **Him by baptism** into **death**, in order that, just as **Christ** was **raised** from the dead by the glory of the **Father**, we too might walk in **newness of life**.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who **shares** in the **first** resurrection (*baptism along with remaining faithful*)! Over such the **second death** has no power, but they will be priests of **God** and of **Christ**, and they will reign with **Him** for a thousand years.

- In order for there to be a second to anything there must be a first. The first death and resurrection are spiritual for all who are obedient to the message of the gospel, even though everyone can expect to die physically someday (*unless Christ returns in the meantime*). But the first death is physical **and** spiritual for those who do **not** obey the gospel message. Physical death is separation from the physical body, but spiritual death is separation from **God**. **Most** will, by their ultimate choice, face a second, spiritual death, being separated from **God** for an eternity, according to the words of **Jesus** in **Mat 7:13-14**. The thousand-year reign with **Christ** began once the persecution by the Romans ended with the Emperor **Constantine (313 AD)** and will continue until “**Satan** will be released from his prison” (**20:7**). Nobody knows when that day will come (**Mat 24:36**), but we all need to be ready for it just the same.

Understanding the two deaths, the spiritual burial and two resurrections, we will now take a look at the two judgments as to when they will occur. According to **Lk 16** when **Jesus** referenced the rich man and **Lazarus**, both went into the spirit realm known as Hades once their physical bodies died. In that realm there are two places, torment and comfort, that are separated by “**a great chasm**” (**v. 26**) and each went to begin what we understand as the commencement of their final, eternal, destiny.

**Luk 16:23** and in Hades, being in torment, he (*the rich man*) lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. **24** And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' **25** But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

This is the rich man's first judgment. From his own actions his decision was made as to where he would spend eternity. **Lazarus** was judged as having been righteous for him to spend the beginning of his eternal state in comfort. Because of the wealthy man's selfishness in not obeying the fulfillment of “**the law and the prophets**”, where he didn't do for **Lazarus** what he would have expected **Lazarus** to have done for him (**Mat 7:12**), he began his eternity in torment. Both will be resurrected at the judgment, and both will continue their separate ways, one to “**enter into the joy of [his] Master**” (**Mat 25:23**), the other to the place “**where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched**” (**Mk 9:48**). The one to have his “lowly body to be like [Christ's] glorious body” (**Php 3:21**), the other to “be tormented day and night forever and ever” (**Rev 20:10**). Obviously, no one wants to spend an eternity where the rich man is headed, and we should by now understand how obedience to the gospel is necessary in order to escape such a place.

**Joh 5:24** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes (*Gk.4100- to entrust [especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ]*) Him Who sent Me **has** eternal life. He

does not come into judgment (*Gk.2920- tribunal: -accusation*) (*will not be brought before the judge to be accused of anything*) but has passed from death to life.

Once again, Christians do not die! Just as Lazarus “was carried by the angels” to be comforted (*Lk 16:22*) so do all the faithful upon death of the physical body. But notice what else Jesus said here; “Whoever hears My word and believes Him”. That has more to it than to just believing in the Father. To ‘believe Him’ is to receive His word in faith with the knowledge that He will do what He said He will do, nothing wavering. But is that all there is to it? Not really. As we look at the form all are to take when Jesus returns, we need to understand where God...

“...has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man Whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.” (*Act 17:31*)

### Preparing For Eternity

Depending on our choices in this life, our eternal state will be decided once we’ve finished this “probationary” period of our pilgrimage here on Earth. After rising from baptism that journey is only in its beginning for the new babe in Christ. Satan may have lost his influence on another soul and will be diligent about getting it back as Peter compared him to “a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (*1 Pet 5:8*). Many, though, will experience what Jesus said about the seed that fell among the rocks and that “[having] no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away” (*Lk 8:13*). We, as the church family, are to be about strengthening each other, if not for the sake of the new babe in Christ, but for our own eternal destiny. There are things we do that please God and there are things we do that will bring His wrath upon us. And we all need to ask ourselves “am I doing what is pleasing to the Lord or not”? So, what are those things, those that please Him and those that do not? Let’s look at the things that God hates and compare them to those things that please Him.

**Pro 6:16** There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to Him:

Seven being a number of completeness, the following are things God hates ‘completely’.

**Pro 6:17** (1) haughty eyes,

Or as in the KJV, “a proud look”. Such is the conceit of the “know-it-all” who boast of their knowledge but truly have no idea of what true wisdom really is. Nor do they understand the concept that “love...is not arrogant” (*1 Cor 13:4*). To be ‘haughty’ then, is to be unwise.

**Eph 5:15** Look carefully then how you walk (*Gk.4043- deport oneself. [Webster- behave]*), not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.

(2) a lying tongue,

We understand that for all liars “their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (*Rev 21:8*). God hates lying so much that it’s listed twice in this passage in different contexts, but still as lying! So what is to be accomplished by lying when nothing “is hidden from [God’s] sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account” (*Heb 4:13*)?

God sees everything, so we need not think we're getting away with speaking falsehoods.

**Eph 4:15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him Who is the Head, into Christ, **16** from Whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

and (3) hands that shed innocent blood,

There are many who are against the death penalty but fail to understand how it was first instituted by a loving God in order for ungodliness to be eliminated from society. Those who commit crimes worthy of death but do not fear the law (*Rom 13:2-3*) do not fear God so what is there to deter their wickedness (*Ecc 8:11*)? The Bible is clear about punishment for the shedding of innocent blood though, like when Cain slew his brother Abel (*Gen 4:8*) or when David had Uriah killed in battle because of his lust for Bathsheba, Uriah's wife (*2 Sam 11:14-15*). Those were "hands that shed innocent blood". Again, aborting innocent babies is also a form of "mischief" (*KJV- Ex 21:22-24*). And although not shedding literal blood, we can be guilty of the blood of others (*for instance the one "who hates his brother"- 1 Jn 3:15*) whose souls we've been entrusted with (*via the Great Commission- Mat 28:19-20 since Christians have inherited the earth- Mat 5:7*), when we "suppress the truth" (*Rom 1:18*) for fear we may either offend them, or that we might be ashamed of our Lord (*Mk 8:39*).

**Act 20:26** Therefore I (*Paul to the elders at Ephesus*) testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, **27 for** I did not shrink from declaring to you the **whole** counsel of God.

We can be guilty of the loss of another person's soul if we fail to declare "the whole counsel of God" to them.

**Pro 6:18** (4) a heart that devises wicked plans,

**Rom 16:17** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

How sad it is when there are those who have such a mindset. Their actions are premeditated with the intent to harm others through their wicked schemes. But we are not to be that way.

**2Ti 2:21** Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. **22** So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. **23** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

(5) feet that make haste to run to evil,

Why is it that some people just can't wait to either hear about another's misfortune, cause trouble or be a part of it?

**1Pe 3:10** For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; **11** let him turn away from evil and do good; let him **seek peace and pursue** it.

**Pro 6:19** (6) a false witness who breathes out lies,

**God** condemned lying about others in the ten commandments (*Ex 20:16*) under the **Mosaic** law. In this context it concerns not just lying as in speaking falsely. Here it includes doing such as a primary means of damaging another person's reputation or character. It is the basis that, without which, the last of the seven things **God** hates cannot stand. But...

**1Co 13:6** [love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices **with the truth**.

As stated, discord wouldn't exist, for the most part, were it not for lying. It's where it gets its strength. Sometimes such isn't so obvious, but it is always dangerous concerning (7) the...

... one who sows discord among brothers.

There were games we played in grade school where teams were picked in such a way as to have the best players in order to win the game. The difference within the church though is that we are all **supposed** to be on the same team. Discord "disjoins" the body and once disjointed there is no strength. **Paul** dealt with such a problem with the churches at Rome and Ephesus.

**Rom 16:18** For such persons do not serve our **Lord Christ**, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve (*Gk.172- unsuspecting*). **19** For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

**Eph 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of **God** comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7** Therefore do not become partners with them; **8** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the **Lord**. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), **10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the **Lord**. **11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

The key here is to be "rightly handling the word of truth" (*2 Tim 2:15*) or none will see the deceitful practices of those who are sowing discord until it's too late and the church "[fails] to meet the test" (*2 Cor 13:5*). **Jesus** said we are to "**be wise as serpents and innocent as doves**" (*Mat 10:16*). To be wise then, we need to be "rightly handling the word of truth".

**Eph 5:1** Therefore be imitators of **God**, as beloved children. **2** And walk in love, as **Christ** loved us and gave **Himself** up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to **God**.

Now that we've looked at which side of the spiritual coin we are on, or want to be on, we'll look at some passages concerning...

### The Incorruptible Body

Questions abound but due to time constraints we will try to very briefly answer a few of them here. What is Heaven like? What will we look like? Will we know each other? Will we know if

our loved ones made it to Heaven? Will we have bodies or spirits or both? What of those who don't make it to Heaven?

What is Heaven like?

Obviously, the only **Person Whose** experienced **Heaven** and spoke personally about it is **Jesus**. It is a place of "reward" (*Mat 5:12*). **John** was given a vision of the throne room in *Rev 4*. And although describing the streets of gold and the gates of pearl in reference to the victorious church in paradise (*21:21*), those are only visions to give mortal man an idea of what to expect of such a place of such magnificence.

What will we look like?

Since "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" with the physical attributes that go with it, those things have been a part of what **God** gave to **His** creation on Earth for procreation. What one person thinks of as beauty another sees differently. So, physical attraction cannot be part of **Heaven** since "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in Heaven" (*Mat 22:31*). But then how ...

Will we know each other?

How did **Peter**, **James** and **John** know **Moses**, who represented the **Old Law**, and **Elijah**, who represented the **Old Testament** prophets, since there wouldn't even have been paintings, let alone a Polaroid, of them in existence?

*Mar 9:2* And after six days **Jesus** took with **Him Peter** and **James** and **John** and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And **He** was transfigured before them, **3** and **His** clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. **4** And there appeared to them **Elijah** with **Moses**, and they were talking with **Jesus**. **5** And **Peter** said to **Jesus**, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah."

There was a reason **Jesus** had **His** inner circle with **Him** to witness the appearance of **Moses** and **Elijah**. They would later understand how they needed to hear the voice of **God** that "came out of the cloud" saying "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him" (*v. 9*). But the question is answered that if **Jesus** disciples recognized those **Old Testament** saints who had been dead for hundreds of years, that yes, we will recognize those we have personally known in our lifetimes if they are there. But, getting back to the question of what we will look like; remember when **Mary** was at the sepulchre weeping because she thought someone had taken the body of **Jesus** away? She mistook **Jesus** for the gardener until **He** spoke to her. It was then that...

*Joh 20:16* ... She turned and said to **Him** in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means **Teacher**).

But according to verse **14** she didn't know it was **Him** even though "she turned around and saw **Jesus** standing" there. When **He** rose from the dead **He** didn't look as though **He** had just been to a plastic surgeon to restore **His** original appearance. **Mary** didn't recognize **Him** because **He** still had the scars on **His** disfigured face from the prophesied beating that **He** bore.

*Isa 50:6* I gave **My** back to those who strike, and **My** cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not **My** face from disgrace and spitting.

Showing again, how appearances won't be as though we were young and vibrant since that won't matter in **Heaven**. Even **Thomas** had to touch **Jesus** before he would believe **Who He** was before stating "My **Lord** and my **God**" (*Jn 20:28*). **John** would later see the vision of a **Lamb** while on the Isle of Patmos, but not just any **Lamb**. After weeping "because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it" (*Rev 5:4*) **John** stated that...

**Rev 5:5** ... one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the **Root** of **David**, has conquered, so that **He** can open the scroll and its seven seals." **6** And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a **Lamb** standing, as though [**He**] had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of **God** sent out into all the earth.

The **Lamb** of **John's** vision had the scars of one that had been slain, showing that even after **Jesus** had gone into **Heaven**, **He** still carried the marks of **His** crucifixion and the beating **He** bore. Such evidences of scarring and dismemberment even **Jesus** spoke of in *Mat 18:8* (and other passages) saying "it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire". So whether we die of natural causes, whether in a fire, car accident or even as "those who had been beheaded for the testimony of **Jesus** and for the word of **God**" (*Rev 20:4*), whatever our condition that we leave this life in, such will be our appearance in eternity, according to what we've seen so far, and it won't matter since vanity will then be a thing of the past.

Will we know if our loved ones made it to Heaven?

*"The most common concern regarding recognition after death is this. If one is able to personally know his loved ones in Heaven, will he not also be aware of those **not** there? How could one be truly happy under such circumstances?"*

*When we have passed from this life we will have a much sharper view of sin and the hideous nature of rebelling against God. Those of our loved ones who find themselves lost will not appear to us in the same sympathetic light as we saw them through the limitations of fleshly examination."*

Wayne Jackson- The Christian Courier/**Will There Be Personal Recognition in Heaven**

With only human emotions to rely on we can often get so depressed over such thoughts. Many, many faithful brethren are in such a position as many of us here are sympathetic to their despair because many of us share such anguish. What is our current solution?

**Rom 15:4** ... through endurance and through the encouragement of the **Scriptures** we might have hope.

Will we have bodies or spirits or both?

**Rom 6:5** For **if** we have been united with **Him** in a death like **His**, we shall certainly be united with **Him** in a resurrection like **His**.

Being united with **Christ** in “a death like **His**” has to do with being “baptized into **His** death” (*Rom 6:3*). “If” is a word that states a condition, in this case it has to do with being in the same state of existence as **Christ** was after **His** resurrection.

**1Jn 3:2** Beloved, we are **God's** children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when **He** (*Jesus*) appears we shall be like **Him**, because we shall see **Him** as **He** is.

**1Co 15:48** As was the man of dust (*Adam*), so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the **Man of Heaven**, so also are those who are of **Heaven**. **49** Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the **Man of Heaven**. **50** I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of **God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. **53** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

What of those who don't make it to Heaven?

**Joh 5:28** Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear **His voice** **29** and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

**Heaven and Hell** are polar opposites. One is a place of unspeakable joy whereas the other of horrifying despair. The one takes an enormous amount of labor to get there, the other takes no effort at all. The labor of the **Christian** is to “keep [himself] unspotted from the world” (*Jas 1:27*) and to follow **Jesus'** example “to seek and save the lost” (*Lk 19:10*) since those who choose, by their actions, not to go to **Heaven**, **God** will deal with when **Christ** returns...

**2Th 1:8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know **God** and on those who do not obey the gospel of our **Lord Jesus**. **9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the **Lord** and from the glory of **His** might, **10** when **He** comes on that day to be glorified in **His** saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

**God** will never send anyone to Hell who doesn't chose, by their actions, to go there. We have a choice as to where we will spend eternity in the eternal form we will receive at the resurrection. We might think our decisions in life make no difference when it comes to going to **Heaven** if we are “good people” but such is not according to what the **Bible** states since it is the “[discerner] of the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (*Heb 4:12*). We've seen in this lesson what is necessary to be pleasing to **God** through the gospel plan of salvation. So where have you decided that you will spend eternity in your eternal form?

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