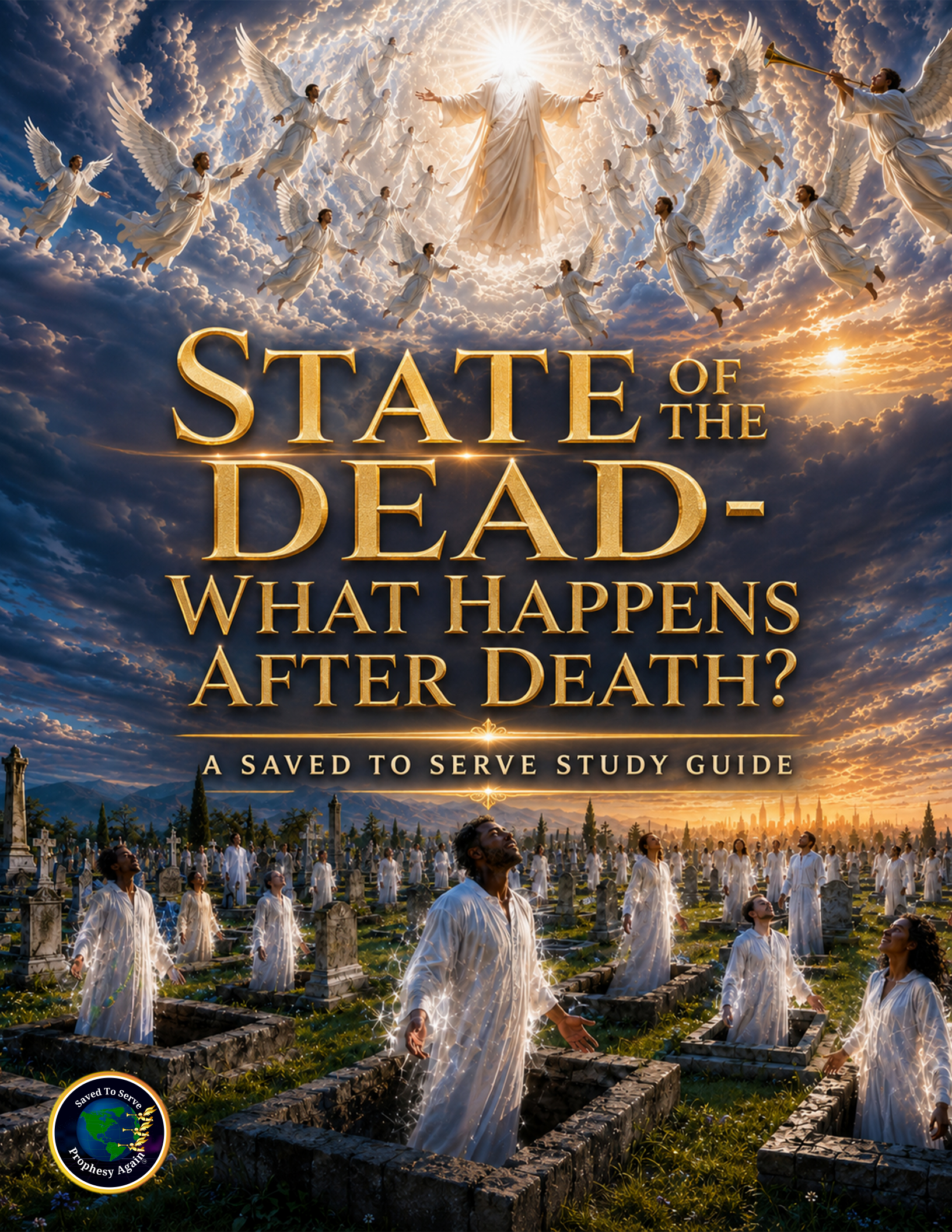




STATE ^{OF THE} DEAD - WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

A SAVED TO SERVE STUDY GUIDE



What Happens After Death?

We let the Bible interpret itself, comparing Scripture with Scripture and rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The study runs in one continuous sequence — from Point 1 through Point 28. Read each reference in your Bible and write your answers on the lines provided.

- I. PURPOSE** In this series of doctrinal lessons we will refute claims that there is not a time when the body dies and we are not “at home” [heaven] with the Lord.

In This Study

1	Paul's two desires	<i>Philippians 1:23, 24</i>
2	The earthly tabernacle	<i>2 Corinthians 5:1-4</i>
3	Absent from the body	<i>2 Corinthians 5:6-8</i>
4	The judgment & the reward	<i>2 Corinthians 5:10</i>
5	Is there consciousness in the grave?	<i>Ecclesiastes 9:5</i>
6	What is a living soul?	<i>Genesis 2:7</i>
7	The rich man & Lazarus	<i>Luke 16:19-31</i>
8	Watch, and study to be approved	<i>Acts 20:28-31</i>

◆ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

“If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”

JOB 14:14 (KJV)

Keep your Bible open and let each text speak for itself. Lay aside tradition, weigh every passage in the light of the whole of Scripture, and answer honestly. Ask the Spirit to make you a wise and watchful Berean — from Point 1 to Point 28 — that you may know what the Bible truly teaches about death, the soul, and the resurrection hope.

2. **CURRENT EVENT** John Piper rejects 'soul sleep,' says believers are with Christ immediately after death. Responding to a listener named Jessica, Piper said the Apostle Paul's writings leave no room for the notion that the soul remains dormant until the resurrection. The North American Mission Board defines "soul sleep," a belief held by groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and some Seventh-day Adventists, teaches that human consciousness ceases at death until the resurrection. "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord," Piper said, quoting 2 Corinthians. "Paul did not conceive of a time when the body dies and we are not at home with the Lord."

christianpost.com — John Piper rejects 'soul sleep' ↗

desiringgod.org — Ten Seconds After You Die ↗

3. **Read Philippians 1:20-24. This is one of the scriptures quoted by Pastor John Piper to prove his belief that believers enter heaven at death. What two desires was Paul wrestling with?— Read: Philippians 1:23, 24**
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4. **Philippians 1:20-24 is better explained by Paul himself in 2 Corinthians 5. Let's do a verse by verse analysis to truly understand what Paul desired to do and what he taught to believers. In 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul references an earthly tabernacle. What did he mean by this earthly tabernacle?— Read: 2 Corinthians 5:4 (first part); 2 Peter 1:13-15**
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5. **In 2 Corinthians 5:2, 3, Paul mentions that his tabernacle (body) groans. What did he desire?— Read: 2 Corinthians 5:2, 3**
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6. **NOTE** A literal house cannot clothe a person or cover their nakedness. Therefore, we know that Paul wasn't referring to a literal building tabernacle but rather his body tabernacle. In the Greek Lexicon of the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the number for tabernacle is 4636 and it means "the human body (as the abode of the spirit) — tabernacle." Paul clearly desired to be clothed with something eternal which only God could provide. We will come back to 2 Corinthians 5:4 which gives us the answer to how and when the clothing of this body tabernacle would take place.

7. **What has God given to the faithful as an earnest that He will one day take us to be in His physical presence? (Notice: The word earnest means an upfront payment in advance as security for the rest.) — Read: 2 Corinthians 5:5**
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- a) **Further Study: See also John 14:17, 18 and verses 1-3 which prove that Jesus gave His Holy Spirit to His followers as assurance of His presence with them on earth and the promise of His return.**

8. Paul recognized that while he was alive in the body (flesh), he couldn't be in the physical presence of the Lord. What was his great desire?— *Read: 2 Corinthians 5:6-8*
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9. Since Paul is the author of 2 Corinthians and Philippians, let us see how he explains himself. Based on 2 Corinthians 5:4, what occurrence was Paul looking forward to, signaling that the righteous would be 'absent from the body and present with the Lord'?— *Read: Job 14:14; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55*
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10. What did Paul say next in 2 Corinthians 5:9 about what we should labor to do?— *Read: 2 Corinthians 5:9*
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11. What urgency compels us to be accepted of God while in our physical body or just before we receive our glorified one?— *Read: 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14*
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12. At which event will the righteous be in the presence of the Lord to receive the verdict of the judgment and their eternal reward?— *Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17*
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13. After which event will the wicked be in the presence of the Lord to receive the verdict of the judgment and their reward?— *Read: Revelation 20:7, 8, 12-14*
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14. **NOTE** John Piper believes and teaches that the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 is that Jesus will bring souls from heaven when He comes the second time to reunite them with their bodies. He teaches that our souls (conscious spirits) will be in heaven with Jesus but our bodies will be in the grave. Let us now address what the Bible says occurs when a person dies. Do they have an immortal soul or do they abide in the grave until the appointed resurrections?

 KEY THOUGHT

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:10 (KJV)

15. Is there consciousness in the grave?— *Read: Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10; Job 14:10, 21*

- a) Since there is no consciousness in the grave, what happens 10 seconds after death? What happens immediately upon dying? — Psalm 146:3, 4

16. What happens to our dead loved ones who lived a righteous life? Are they praising God in heaven right now?— *Read: Psalm 115:17; Psalm 6:4, 5; Isaiah 38:18, 19*

- a) Where is the righteous King David? Is he in heaven right now? — Acts 2:29, 34

17. Can the dead come back to visit and communicate with their loved ones who are living?— *Read: Job 7:7-10*

18. Note: A popular belief among Christendom is that a soul is a separate entity from our body that lives on after we die. However, this is contrary to what the Bible teaches. What two elements make up the Biblical formula that comprises a living soul?— *Read: Genesis 2:7*

19. Who does the word “soul” refer to in various passages of the Bible?— *Read: Exodus 1:5; 1 Peter 3:20; Acts 2:41; Acts 27:37*

20. Can a soul die?— *Read: Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Revelation 16:2, 3*

21. **NOTE** The account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 has perplexed many people on the subject of hell and what happens after death. Based on this parable, some make the assumption that when you die, you immediately go to heaven or hell and if you end up in hell, you will burn for all eternity. Let us analyze this passage to get the proper understanding.

22. Read Luke 16:19-31. Is this passage literal or figurative?— *Read: Luke 15:1-3*

ANSWER It's a parable. Luke 15 begins a series of parables that Jesus explains which continue into Luke chapter 16 with the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus was trying to show them how they treated sinners and how sinners are treated by our loving God. The final point of the parable is that once we die, our decision for Christ or against Him is fixed and we cannot change afterwards (Luke 16:26-31).

23. What is one lesson being taught in this parable?— *Read: Luke 16:25, 26; Revelation 22:11, 12; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10*

ANSWER We will be judged according to what we do in this life and there is no repentance when in the grave. Our decisions are final.

24. What is another lesson being taught in this parable?— *Read: Luke 16:27-31; John 11:43-45, 53; John 12:37*

ANSWER If we, like the Pharisees, have our hearts hardened to God's Word and truth, then no miracle can change our hearts. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but the Pharisees still wouldn't be convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

25. Meditate on the following closing points. As Paul was soon to give up his life for the cause of Christ, what did Paul instruct the overseers of the church of God to do? (Context: verses 16-18 mention that Paul was speaking.)— *Read: Acts 20:28*

26. Who did Paul say would enter in among the church?— *Read: Acts 20:29*

27. What would these grievous wolves do?— *Read: Acts 20:30*

28. What two things does Paul counsel us to do as we see false teachers and false doctrines threatening to overthrow God's flock and His truth?

a) Acts 20:31

b) 2 Timothy 2:15

Asleep in Jesus, Awake at His Coming

The Bible calls death a sleep — a dreamless rest in the grave, without consciousness, praise, or knowledge, until the Lifegiver calls. Our hope is not a disembodied soul slipping away at death, but the trumpet of God, the resurrection of the just, and the moment when this mortal puts on immortality. Then — and not before — the righteous will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-18 (KJV)

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout... and the dead in Christ shall rise first... Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Will you rest your hope in the resurrection morning and be ready when the trumpet sounds?

REFERENCES

Sources & Notes

THE MYSTERY UNFOLDED

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51, 52 (KJV)

SCRIPTURE & STUDY HELPS

- 1 Strong's Greek #4636, “skenos” — the human body (as the abode of the spirit), tabernacle. biblehub.com/greek/4636 ↗
- 2 The Christian Post — “John Piper rejects ‘soul sleep,’ says believers are with Christ immediately after death.” christianpost.com ↗
- 3 Desiring God — “Ten Seconds After You Die” (interview with John Piper). desiringgod.org ↗

All Scripture is quoted from the King James Version (KJV). Current-event sources are cited for study and comment.