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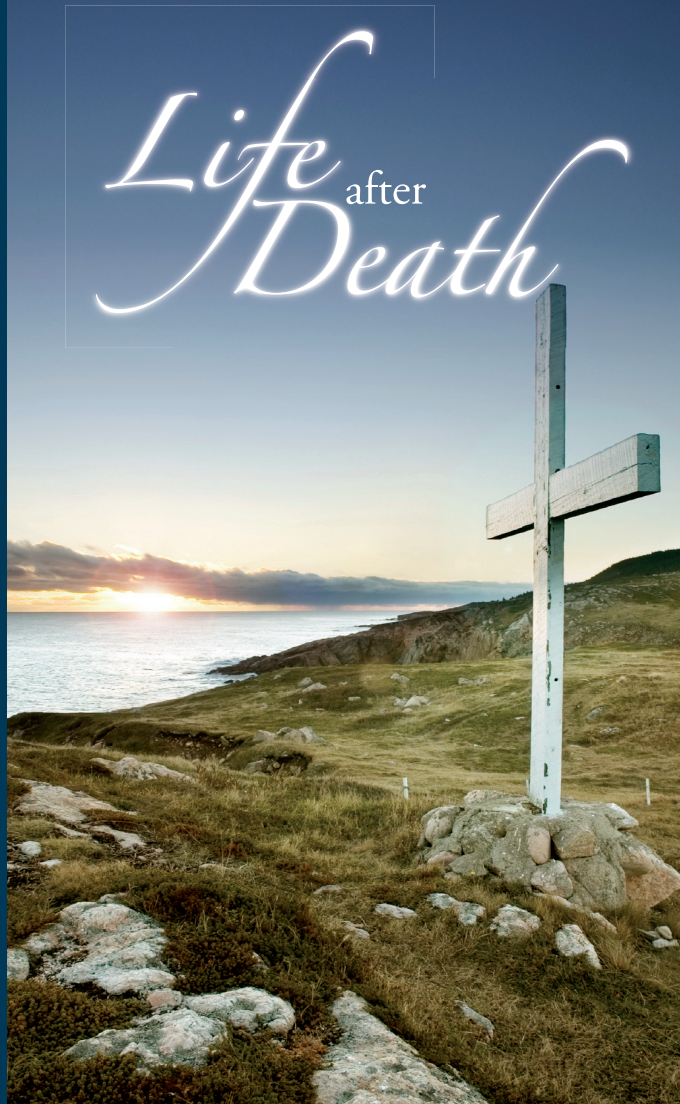
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# Life after Death



Egerton Long is an ordained Baptist Minister and has served in churches in both the USA & Australia. He and his wife Betty also served among the Indigenous people in Australia for over 25 years. Other booklets are available in this series as well as Daily Devotional material.

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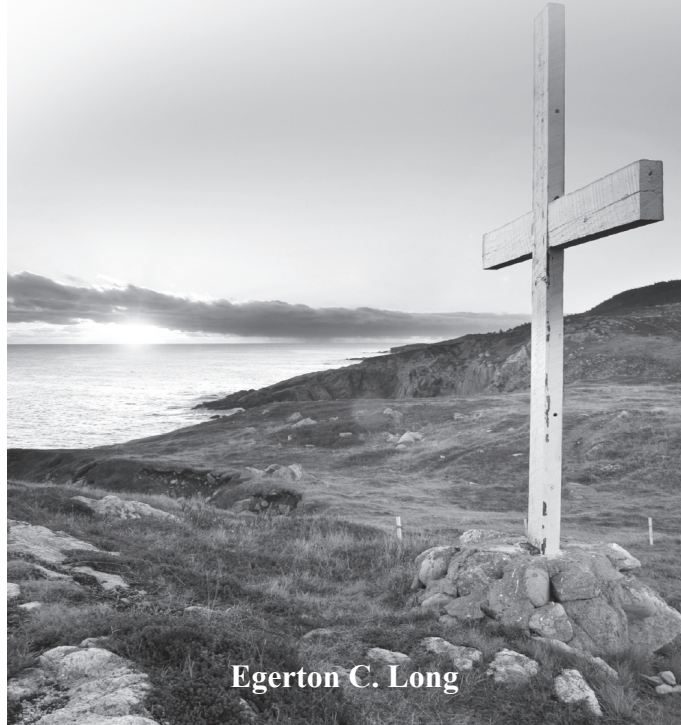
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NOTES

*Life* after  
*Death*



**Egerton C. Long**

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

## NOTES

No one has ever come back to tell us what lies beyond the doorway of death. The one exception, of course, is Jesus Christ himself. While the Bible does tell us of several people being raised from the dead, it seems they were never allowed to tell what they saw on the other side.

Many persons have talked about coming back after their death. Some terminally ill people have even made appointments with loved ones to return and tell them what it is like on the other side. If these loved ones heard any sounds, the voices they heard most likely belonged to evil spirits. There could be little or no truth in what they said.

In recent years, a large number of people have had what has been called an “NDE” – a near death experience. This has occurred usually when the person has been sedated while undergoing surgery or has been involved in a serious accident or similar situation. Often they have spoken of a “great light” or even a tunnel or some type of experience but most of them have not given a lot of detail to help us fully know what is ahead.

*Does this mean that we do not know what lies beyond the doorway of death? Have our loved ones gone to a place of which we know absolutely nothing?*

## **NOTES**

The Bible answers these questions for us. The only facts about life and death which we can be sure of are found in the Bible. Several of these were spoken by Jesus Christ himself.

God does not satisfy all our curiosity concerning life beyond the doorway of death. There are many questions we could ask about the future for both believers and unbelievers which are not answered for us in the Bible. However God's Word tells us enough to give a clear picture of the state of both the righteous and the unrighteous.

### **THERE IS LIFE**

#### **BEYOND PHYSICAL DEATH**

Various cults teach that when a person dies as an 'unbeliever' – one who does not believe in their teaching - his/her soul is annihilated i.e. completely destroyed. They believe that an unbeliever dies as an animal dies and there is no further existence for that person.

But the Bible plainly teaches that death is not the end of everything and that there is life beyond death for everyone.

#### **QUOTING THE BIBLE**

Job said: 'After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God' (Job 19:26).

David said: 'And I - in righteousness I shall see your face; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with seeing your likeness' (Psalm 17:15).

Jesus Christ said: **‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies’** (John 11:25).

The theory of annihilation is based on a wrong understanding of the meaning of the word ‘death’. A dictionary may define death as the ‘cessation or end of life’ but the Bible does not say that. Death may be the end of physical life but the Bible clearly teaches that the soul never dies and that we all must finally stand before God after our physical death. ‘Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment’ Hebrews 9:27).

Several groups believe in ‘re-incarnation’ – that even though we die, we will come back in another form to live again on earth. According to their beliefs, this process may be repeated several times. Again this is contrary to what the bible teaches. Our existence after physical death continues with the same personality we have had here on earth. We will be changed but that does not mean re-incarnation.

### **WHAT IS DEATH?**

The simplest definition of the word ‘death’ is separation’ – that is, separation from that which provides or maintains life. A fish taken out of water may live for a short period but it has already started to die. It is separated from its natural environment. Take a leaf from a tree or

I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in God’s sight.

I accept Jesus Christ now as my Saviour.

I thank Him for saving me.

Sign your name here

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Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

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## HOW TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOUR

If God has been speaking to you as you have read this booklet and if you are willing now to take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, here is what you should do:

1. **Confess** – tell God in your own simple words that you are a sinner needing a Saviour (Read Romans 3:23) Tell God you are sorry for your sin – the Bible Word is ‘repent’.
2. **Accept** – tell God that you see Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and that you accept him now (Read Romans 6:23)
3. **Believe** – that Jesus Christ has saved you because you asked him to do so (Read Romans 10:13) His Word is the assurance that God has done what you asked Him to do.

If you have made this decision today then sign your name here and tell someone else what you have done. Join a church where you can hear God’s Word preached and have fellowship with other believers.

a flower from a plant and it immediately begins to die. Why? It has been separated from its source of life.

On the human level, when sin came into the world, man died spiritually because he became separated from God. Physical death resulted because one of the consequences of sin is death. The simplest definition of death is ‘separation from the source of life’.

### THREE TYPES OF DEATH

This definition of death as separation holds good for the three different types of death spoken of in the Bible. **Physical death** is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. It happens to everyone unless the Lord intervenes as he did for Enoch and Elijah. Romans 5:12 states that ‘death came to all men’. This includes both physical and spiritual death.

**Spiritual death** is the separation of the soul and spirit from God. We read in Ephesians 2:1: ‘As for you, you were dead (before you came to Christ) in your transgressions and sins’. That is spiritual death. Zacharias said that John the Baptist would have a message for those ‘living in darkness and in the shadow of death’ (Luke 1:79). He was talking about spiritual death, the separation of the soul and spirit from God.

The third type of death spoken of in the Bible is **eternal death**. ‘The wages of sin is death’

(Romans 6:23). Revelation 21:8 adds: 'This is second death'. What is the type of death these verses are speaking about? It is spiritual death made permanent and means a soul is eternally separated from God.

In the next world an unbeliever continues to be separated from God because of sin. In eternal death, he/she find themselves eternally cut off, separated, from God, in a place variously described in the Bible and usually known as 'hell'. Death is separation, but it is not the end of a person's existence.

## WORDS USED IN THE BIBLE FOR 'PHYSICAL DEATH'

The various words used in the Bible when speaking of death prove that physical death is not the end of everything. Instead they show clearly that death, as we know it, is only a transition or change from one kind of life to another. It is a doorway, not a 'dead end'.

In 2 Timothy 4:6 Paul wrote: 'The time has come for my departure', meaning his physical death was very near. The Greek word for 'departure' was used in some very interesting ways which show exactly what Paul had in mind.

It was used by seamen when the time came to take their ship out of port. It described the action of letting go the ropes which held the ship to the dock, allowing it to move out and on to

11, 12.) This is called the 'Great White Throne Judgment'. The test very simply is, 'Is your name in the Christ's Book of Life or not?' (Revelation 20:15). It is not, 'How good you have been'. It is not, 'How did you live on earth?' It is not, 'How often did you go to church?' It is simply, 'What did you do with Jesus Christ?'

I ask you what physical death will mean for you. Where will your soul go? Into the presence of Christ? Or are you still separated from God by sin? Remember that separation is made permanent for eternity if you die without Christ.

Jesus Christ provided the way of escape for you b his death on the cross. Now you can be reconciled to the God who loves you. But it is up to you. You must accept what Christ has done for you. We can pray for you, but you alone determine your eternal destiny.

If you have never accepted Christ as your Saviour, will you do it without any further delay? Will you say, 'I take you as my Saviour for all eternity'? **DO IT NOW. Read the next page of this booklet and accept Jesus Christ today as your personal Saviour today.**

From

the blood of Christ, that is, His death and resurrection. David said that his baby boy could not return to him, but that he, David, would go to be with his child. Everyone will recognise that David was a saved man and so the child must have been waiting for him in paradise (See 2 Samuel 12:23).

### **THE UNSAVED DEAD**

From Luke 16:23 we see that before Christ came, the souls of the unsaved dead went to Sheol. (See diagram again). This is described by Christ in Luke 16 as a place of torment. It is mentioned by Christ in several other places in the Gospels as a place of everlasting punishment. And the same word that is translated 'eternal' or 'everlasting' when describing life, is also used to describe eternal or everlasting death.

It is the same for the souls of the unsaved who die today. They, too, go to this section of Hades in which they are waiting in darkness and torment until the great judgement day of God. Do unsaved souls ever leave Sheol? According to Revelation 20:11-15 it would seem that the unsaved souls of the dead leave this awful place only to stand before the throne of Almighty God.

The unsaved receive their resurrected bodies before being judged, and are sent to the lake of fire for eternity. (Read Revelation 20:4-6 and

the broader sea or ocean. Did such a departure mean the end of everything for the ship and its sailors? Never. Actually, it spoke of a new beginning, a new experience.

The word is used today in every airport of the world where an aircraft is listed for departure while in another airport elsewhere it would be listed as an arrival. The same word in the Greek was used by the military. It described the action of the soldiers in taking down their tents after a night's camp ready to move on to another place.

It is clear that Paul meant that he would soon be moving on to another place. In his case through death, he would pass into the presence of Christ in Heaven.

### **DEATH AS AN 'EXODUS'**

Another word found in the New Testament speaking of death, although translated 'departure' is our word 'exodus'. In Luke 9:30-31 we are told of how Moses and Elijah came to talk with Christ at his transfiguration and actually spoke about his death. The word literally is 'exodus'. Peter used the same word in 2 Peter 1:15 when he wrote about his own impending death. Again an exodus is a going out from one place to another, as in the case of the Israelites. What did the 'Exodus' mean to them? Was it an end or a beginning? It was the end of slavery in Egypt but it was the beginning of

a new life and a journey to a new country. Again it is a clear illustration of what death means for the believer - a going out from earth into a new and wonderful country, Heaven itself.

Another word used to describe death is in 2 Corinthians 5:1 when Paul wrote: 'If the earthly tent we live in is destroyed...' The word 'destroyed' can be translated either by dissolved, dismantled or demolished. When a building is demolished, it is no longer a building but the materials are still in existence. It is not a total destruction for the bricks or stones.

When death comes to our earthly house, our natural body, it is not the end of everything. Paul goes on to say that when this happens: 'We have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands' (2 Corinthians 5:1). It is true that our natural body does decay as we grow older. It is being 'destroyed', and that causes problems for each of us. But that is not the whole picture.

A famous leader in the United States had just turned 80 years of age. He was asked: 'Mr. Adams, how are you?' He replied: 'If you want to know how the old body is, I tell you it is in pretty bad shape. But if you want to know how I am, I tell you I was never better'. His old house was being destroyed but he himself was fully alive and looking forward to the new house God was preparing for him.

passed immediately into the presence of Christ. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 that he 'would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord'. Many saints on their deathbeds have spoken in terms of seeing Christ as they left here to go to be with him. Their bodies have gone to the grave and have returned to dust from which they were formed, but their souls are in heaven. One day at the second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16) their bodies will be resurrected. When the dead in Christ rise, their souls and bodies will be joined together again by resurrection power.

There are a number of cults that teach that there is 'soul sleep' between death and resurrection. This is not taught anywhere in the Word of God. Nor is a place called 'purgatory' mentioned in the Bible either. If Christians had to go to purgatory to pay part of the price for their sin, then God's Word is wrong when it says that Christ 'bore our sins in his body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24).

Remember, those who are saved go directly into presence of Christ today when their souls leave their bodies. That is why we can sing, 'I shall see him face to face, and tell the story, saved by grace'.

What about babies who die? God's Word is again clear that babies and children who die before they reach the age of understanding or accountability are 'covered' or benefit from

In the days before Christ came, those who died in faith went to Paradise, or as the Jews called it, 'Abraham's bosom'. No doubt the first one to enter Paradise was Abel, who was slain by his brother Cain. Possibly the last one to enter was the dying thief on the cross to whom our Lord said, '... today you will be with me in paradise'. (Look up Luke 16:22 and Luke 23:42, 43.)

When Christ died on the cross he went to paradise and possibly spoke across the gulf that separated paradise, the home of the unsaved dead. (See diagram on page 13.) Peter mentioned this in 1 Peter 3:19.

Those who had been in paradise since the early days of the Old Testament must have given Christ a wonderful welcome. Then, either on his resurrection day or at the time he went back to heaven, Christ took with him into heaven all those Old Testament saints who had been waiting in paradise for his coming (John 20:17, Luke 24:39, Ephesians 4:8). What a marvellous moment that must have been! What a march of triumph! What a welcome!

## **PARADISE EMPTY –**

### **SAINTS IN HEAVEN WITH CHRIST**

Since the death and resurrection of Christ, those who have died trusting in him have

## **WHAT LIES AHEAD?**

We have already mentioned what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6: 'The time has come for my departure'. But what was ahead for him? He went on to explain: 'Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness...' (v.8). Death for a Christian means anticipation. On the morning of the day when the evangelist D.L. Moody passed away he cried out: 'This is my coronation day!' His last words were: 'Earth is receding, Heaven is opening before me'.

Finally, here is an even more wonderful way to look at death. It means going home to our heavenly Father's house. There is nothing as pleasant as going home after a long period away. When a believer comes down to the doorway called 'death', he/she discovers it is merely a gate leading into our Father's house. Christ will be waiting for us just inside the gate. There is no need to fear what might happen to us when we die. As David reminds us in Psalm 23:4: 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me'.

## **THE TEACHING OF CHRIST**

Jesus Christ clearly taught that those who leave this earth through the gate of death are conscious on the other side. They are either happy or are in torment, but they know what is happening. In Luke 16:19-31 we read one

of Christ's remarkable stories, telling what happened after two men – a rich man and a beggar - in the same city, died. Both men were very much alive even though their bodies were in the grave. The rich man carried on a conversation and he was able to remember his relatives. He was conscious of three locations: where he was, where he had come from and the place where the beggar was. He was in serious pain while the beggar was enjoying peace, joy and comfort.

All the teaching of the Word of God is that there is life after death. There is eternal life in Heaven for those who knew Christ as their Saviour here on earth. There is a future conscious state in Hell for those who did not know him here.

## **WHERE ARE THE SOULS OF THE DEPARTED?**

Are there only two places, heaven and hell, to which the souls of the departed go? Have there ever been any others? Will there be any others?

A number of places are mentioned in the Bible. Heaven, of course, is mentioned hundreds of times. Hell is spoken of many times, including 12 times in the Gospels when Christ himself used the word. Then the name 'Gehenna' is used. It comes from the name of the rubbish dump for the city of Jerusalem. A fire was continuously

burning there to destroy whatever was dumped there each day. We understand that even the bodies of beggars who died in the streets were thrown on to this burning rubbish dump.

In an attempt to make clear what these different names mean, we have included a diagram which we hope will clarify the meaning of each place or term. We said this is an 'attempt' to reconcile these names. We recognise that there may easily be entirely different interpretations but this diagram seems to bring the various places together as mentioned in the Word of God.

You will notice that the diagram is in the form of a house with four different areas. The top one is, of course, heaven where God has always lived. This is the place to which saints now go at death and is the place Christ referred to in John 14 as 'My Father's house'.

The middle part, earth, is where you and I live and where all mankind has lived since the days of creation.

The lower parts are separate sections of the one place which is known in Scripture under the general name of 'Hades'. That word means either 'the unseen world' or the 'all-receiving place'. In other words, it is a place which we cannot yet see but which has been used to hold all the souls of those who died in Old Testament times.