

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CHRISTIANS DIE?

### Problem:

- What does Paul mean when he says, “the dead in Christ will rise first” (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**)
  - I thought to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:8**)
  - Didn't Paul say that he wanted to depart to be with Christ? (**Philippians 1:23**)
  - Didn't Jesus say to the thief on the cross, “today you will be with me in paradise”? (**Luke 23:43**)

### The Transitional Time

- Sheol (Old Testament) /Hades (New Testament) = the grave, the afterlife
- Luke 16:19-31 Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus
  - A place of comfort at Abraham's side and a place of torment and anguish
  - A chasm fixed between the two that can't be crossed
- Jesus' death on the cross opens the way to God's presence (the veil is torn)
  - Ephesians 4:8-10 Jesus descended to lead a host of captives and then ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.
  - Matthew 27:51-54 mini-resurrection at Jesus' death because Jesus is leading the souls of those who died while the promise was still far off, into heaven.

### So What Happens Now (To Us Who Believe)?

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 when we die our soul/spirit is at home in the presence of the Lord
  - BUT we are waiting for our body to be raised (the Resurrection)
  - That's why Paul talks about being clothed and the longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.
  - Jesus talked about this heavenly dwelling that is being prepared for us in John 14:1-4 (the analogy is a building but it is actually a resurrected and transformed body)
  - Revelation 6:9-11 talks about the souls in the presence of the Lord that are crying out, “how long” who are not clothed and so they are given a white robe.
- 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 Paul describes the difference between our earthly bodies and the heavenly body that will be raised in the resurrection.

### Summary:

- Before Jesus' death, those who died in faith, went to the grave at Abraham's side (a place of comfort) and waited for the way to be opened through Christ's death. The wicked also went to the grave but were held in a separate place of torment and anguish.
- At the time of Jesus' death (in the three days that His body was in the grave) He descended into the grave to lead the saints who died in faith to heaven into the presence of God.
- Now when we die our soul/spirit goes to be at home in the presence of the Lord where we wait to be clothed with our new resurrected bodies.
- Then at the sound of the trumpet, when the Lord comes at the resurrection, the dead in Christ will be raised (their bodies will be raised and changed and they will be clothed), and those who are alive will also be changed in a moment. In the twinkling of an eye their earthly bodies will be transformed into heavenly, incorruptible, imperishable bodies.