

Lesson Sixteen

Throughout time people have tried to predict the future. As Christians, we have a great advantage—we know the one who makes the future, and he has told us about it. In this lesson we will see that God tells us what the future holds for us, for others, and for the Universe.

After the date of our birth, the most significant date in the future is the day of our death. For those who are still alive at the end of the world, that will be the most significant date. With this in mind, we will start by looking at what happens when we die, then we will look at what happens on and after Judgment Day.

What happens when people die?

God says:	From this we know:
<p>Ecclesiastes 12:7 "The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."</p>	<p>The soul separates from the body. The body remains in the grave until Judgment Day. The soul returns to God.</p>
<p><i>Hebrews 9:27</i> "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."</p> <p><i>Luke 16:19-26</i> "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'</p>	<p>The soul is judged immediately by the Lord.</p> <p>Based on God's judgment the soul will be sent either to heaven or to hell.</p>

Since the soul is judged after death, that begs the question, "On what does God base his judgment?"

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>John 3:16-18</i> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."</p>	<p>All will be judged on the basis of faith. Those who trusted Jesus as their savior will be declared innocent of sin and righteous in God's eyes. Those who rejected Jesus will be declared guilty of their sin and condemned.</p>
<p><i>James 2:14-17</i> "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."</p> <p><i>John 5:28, 29</i> "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."</p>	<p>Good works result from faith in Jesus. They prove that faith is present. Good works do not determine whether or not someone goes to heaven.</p>

What are hell and heaven like?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>Matthew 25:41, 46</i> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."</p> <p><i>Mark 9:47, 48</i> "It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'their worm</p>	<p>Hell is a place of eternal torment originally made for the angels who rebelled against God.</p> <p>The pain there is real and lasts forever. It is filled with physical pain described as burning as well as the eternal despair and hopelessness of being cut off from God and his goodness forever.</p>

God says:**From this we know:**

does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

2 Thessalonians 1:9 “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power”

1 Corinthians 2:9 “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”

Revelation 7:15 “Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.”

Revelation 21:4 “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Romans 8:18 “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

1 Corinthians 13:12 “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

Heaven is a place of eternal joy beyond our imagination.

There we will live with Jesus in every way imaginable and never again suffer any consequences of sin.

We will be fully restored to the image of God. Our knowledge of God will be made complete.

Even though Christ has promised us unimaginable joy in heaven, that does not mean that Christians will never fear death. Our sinful nature does not trust in the promises Jesus has given us. We need to stay in contact with God's word to reassure us that he is true to his word and that there is nothing to fear when we die, since we trust that Jesus has saved us from our sins.

As we mentioned earlier, not everyone will die before the end of the world. If it is possible that we might be among those who live to see the end, we should find out what the end is going to be like. Thankfully, God has not only told us about the end of the world, he has given us signs that predict the end.

What are the signs of the end of the world and what should we know about them?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>Matthew 24:4-14</i> “Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.’”</p>	<p>The signs of the end of the world consist of: false Christs, wars and unrest, famines, earthquakes, persecution of Christians, Christians falling away from the faith, false prophets, increasing wickedness, and the Gospel reaching throughout the world.</p>
<p><i>Matthew 24:36</i> “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”</p>	<p>These signs are not given so we can figure out when the end will be.</p>
<p><i>Matthew 24:42-44</i> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”</p>	<p>These signs are given so we will always be ready.</p>
<p><i>2 Peter 3:3-4</i> “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since</p>	<p>Unbelievers will scoff and find other explanations for the signs. They will reject the claim that Jesus is returning.</p>

God says:	From this we know:
the beginning of creation.”	
<p><i>Luke 21:25-28</i> “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”</p>	<p>Believers will look for the signs and eagerly await Jesus’ promised return.</p>

What will happen at the end of the world?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>Matthew 24:3</i> “As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’”</p>	<p>Jesus will return as he promised.</p> <p>He will return visibly, in glory, with the angels attending him, as the King he is. It will not occur in secret.</p>
<p><i>Acts 1:11</i> “‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’”</p>	<p>When Jesus actually appears, the unbelieving world will react with fear and dread because they will realize who it is they have been rejecting.</p>
<p><i>Matthew 25:31</i> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.”</p>	
<p><i>Matthew 24:30</i> “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.”</p>	
<p><i>Revelation 1:7</i> “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those</p>	

God says:**From this we know:**

who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16 “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”

John 5:25-29 “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

Acts 17:31 “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

The bodies of all people will be resurrected and reunited with their souls. Jesus will publicly judge all people (Judgment Day).

This is a second time of judgment. Even those who have already been judged at their deaths will stand before Christ on Judgment Day. So what is the difference between the judgment that takes place at death and the judgment that takes place on Judgment Day?

God says:**From this we know:**

Matthew 25:31-33 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

At death the judgment is private (on an individual basis). On Judgment Day it becomes public.

But Judgment Day is not the only thing that happens at the end of the world. There is still one more thing for God to do. What is it?

God says:

2 Peter 3:10-13 "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

From this we know:

The world as we know it will cease to exist. God will provide a new place for his people to live with him physically and spiritually for all eternity.

All Bible passages are from the New International Version.