

# *AFTER DEATH*

A brief discussion and illustration

Herbert L Peterson  
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# AFTER DEATH

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## **Introduction**

In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jn 1:1.

They—God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—created the world and all that is in it. They created man, gave him freedom of choice, and put him in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, in their first choice, chose wrongly. Now, all that follow, must work and suffer physical hardship and physical death.

The plan for man was gradually revealed during several dispensations and, finally, fully revealed after the death of Jesus on the cross.

There were many great moments in the rise and fall of mankind. There were many great God-fearing men, some being mentioned in the Hebrew hall of fame. Heb 11.

The Lord, the Father, was a stern father-ruler for the Patriarchs and, later, Israel. He demanded excellence and strict obedience to the rules.

God's rules were right and perfect. But man, by himself, using his own philosophy and ideals, could never match those of God, or of Christ in the New Testament.

Animal sacrifices were established as a way of appeasing Godly-anger, as well as, serving in worship to God. Further, they served to smooth relations between men. Blood was a part of sacrifices. It came to be the most important thing--it represented life. It was treated with special care and not burned, as was the flesh of the sacrifice. Sin offering was first defined at Mt Sinai. Ex 29:14.

Jesus, as God, came to earth, and lived among us as a person with the same desires as others. But, at the same time, he was divine. He was perfect. He lived a sinless life with an agape love for the Father and others. At the beginning of his ministry, he hunted up John, along the Jordan River, to be buried in the water of baptism. After that, he went to the Judean hills along the Jordan valley for 40 days without food or drink. During that time he was accosted and tempted by Satan with earthly awards, to which Jesus put him down by showing reverence for the Father and His commandments.

Jesus ministered, taught, and preached for about three and half years. He already knew and even mentioned it, that he would be killed at Jerusalem. Dying on the cross was the *ultimate sacrifice*. As mentioned in Hebrews, it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. So then, by Christ's death on the cross, this ended the need for animal sacrifices. This, of course, would introduce a new dispensation, which was, and is, the Christian Dispensation, being the last in the scriptures. This is the New Covenant with Christ.

The early animal sacrifices turned away God's wrath, for those who followed God's strict laws--called The Law. They were marked to be awarded eternal life. Their sins were not really expunged, but saved somewhere temporarily, only God knows where. Now, with Christ's death, the shedding of His blood redeemed those saints under the Old Law, taking away their sins.

Under the Law, it was fear God and keep his commandments. It was of externals and negatives--thou shalt nots. Love of God and love of neighbor was right there, but was commanded. Penalty was stressed.

Jesus, on the other hand, began to talk of faith, and grace, and to keep His commandments. He taught divinely inspired ways to live. Jesus was a transition from the old to the new--now stressing internals. He, also, said, "don'ts," but he emphasized on higher levels of response from the inner person. He said the great commandments, love of God, and love of neighbor, was not only still there, but really the crux of the Law and good human behavior. He made love to be intrinsic: from the heart, mind, and soul, and for the good of others--agape love. "If you love me, you will keep my

commandments.” Dt 6:5; Lev 19:18; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lu 18.27. The penalty is still there: if you fail to keep his commandments, you fail to make the mark.

Importantly, after the resurrection, at the last moment before his ascension, Jesus spoke a final command. This, we now recognize as, being one of the most important commands in our life to ensure eternal life with Him. This concerns blood. Remember how God, with the Israelites in Egypt, told them how the first-born could be saved. This was to spread animal blood on the door posts and lintel. At midnight, the Lord came by and literally “passed over” the houses of those who obeyed his command. So now, we have something similar in Jesus’ last command. Jesus said to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Probably, at that point, the apostles were a little hazy about this importance. After the Spirit came upon them in the Temple, they began to realize and teach about the true significance of His death. They had been used to animal sacrifices, the complex procedures, and the purpose all their life, but this was new. They, too, began to realize the importance of water baptism. First, Jesus demonstrated the act by being baptized at the beginning of His ministry. At that time, the Lord spoke from the heavens, witnessing, saying, “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Later, at the Transfiguration, up in Mt Hermon, the voice again gave the same confirmation but, with the added exhortation to, “hear ye Him.”

Paul, especially, began to preach the “death, burial, and resurrection.” Jesus had commanded baptism and, Paul, under divine inspiration, expanded on the meaning of water immersion for the remission of sins. In Ro 6.4ff, it represents a burial. It is a burial that gets into Christ’s death and, hence, reaching into His blood. Coming up out of the water represents a new life--all former sins being washed away. Peter also stresses the importance in that, “baptism doth now save us.” I Pet 3:21; Gal 3.27.

It is so marvelous and mind boggling, that the Lord came up with such a simple and, at the same time, a symbolically suggestive way, to get rid of all past sins--going down into the watery grave of baptism to reach His death and His blood, then, coming out of the water suggests resurrection to a new life. Just thinking about it does *not* accomplish the act. There must be acceptance of the command.

Ro 6:3ff. We are *commanded* to take this action to represent his death, burial and resurrection.

Those disciples that followed Jesus' commands in life and were baptized, were called Christians, first, at Antioch. Acts 11:26 Of course, true Christians, today, are baptized by immersion, as originally, in N.T. times.

The Israelites, in early times, fell away, going to idols, for instance. So we, today, are prone to substitute our own procedures. Some introduce ideas that are not what is commanded. One is a popular teaching that, "just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is all that is needed to be in Christ. A proof scripture for that, they say, is Jn 3.16. However, this is different from the faith and practice in the New Testament--the New Covenant.

Paul teaches that it is the act of baptism that puts one into Christ. Then the *Lord* does the adding of individuals to His Church. Acts 2:47. The disciples were also referred to as saints.

Man falls into the trap of picking and choosing what procedures that *he* thinks are best. Even the name of a church has been named to honor a man. One large group professes baptism but, on the other hand, denigrates it and removes the sacrificial significance by, "being saved," before baptism. Baptism performed after that is meaningless. Is Peter wrong when he says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . . ? Is Paul wrong at Ro 6.3ff? Is Paul wrong at Gal 3.27, when he says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"?

Other groups are named for various reasons. It is Christ's church and should be named after Him. One such example is in Rom 16:16, "The churches of Christ salute you." This is why the *restoration* idea is so much more powerful than reformation. Restoration embodies the idea of returning to the faith and practice of the early church, without having to try to sift out the present day practices found to be nonbiblical.

Further, *all* available scriptures in context, on a particular subject, need to be examined and included for consideration during interpretation. All scripture must, and does, harmonize. Our body of

scripture ranges over 1600 years with 40 different writers, and all harmonize. One example is the great prophecy in the O.T. by Jeremiah that there would be a *new* covenant. Jer 31:31--34. It is copied into the N.T. at Heb 8:8--10 and 10:16,17. Compare the Greek in the Septuagint and in the latest Greek N.T. manuscript, and it is almost word for word. In fact, there are many excerpts from the O.T.

*Jesus said.* “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (The Golden Rule) Mt 7:12.

*Jesus cautions.* “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Mt 7:13,14. NAS.

### **Purpose of the Illustration**

The main thrust of the Bible is in the salvation of man. And, the illustration shows that. If man follows God’s commandments and remains close to Him, he will inherit eternal life. Every detail is not known--only what is gleaned from all the scriptures.

We are born into a world and we live in an atmosphere of temptation on every hand. At the end of life one dies, the body goes to the ground, and the spirit goes back to God who gave it. From there on, it appears to be moved in a two-step sequence.

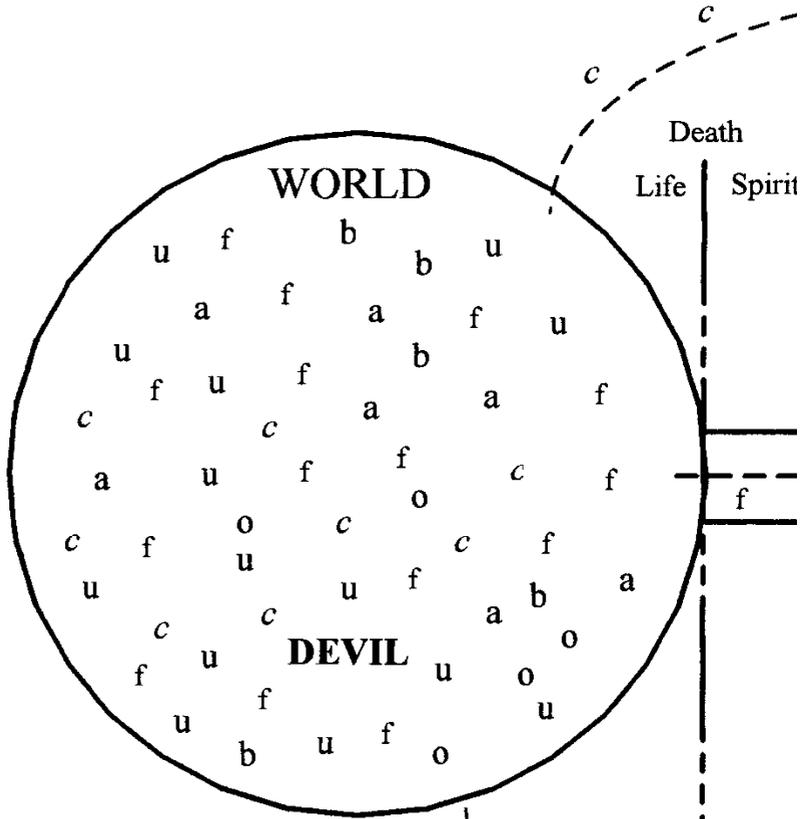
First. The spirit is selected, or guided into one of the two places in Hades: the good place—Paradise; or, the bad place—Tartarus. There the spirit is held until Christ comes again.

Second. Those in Paradise rise first to meet him in the clouds, then joined by Christians living on earth, Then, on into heaven and eternal joy. I Thes 4:13-17.

Those in the lower part—Tartarus—are judged and sent on to Hell—the eternal place of fire, smoke and torment.

What happens to the earth? It melts with fervent heat. II Pet 3:10. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the

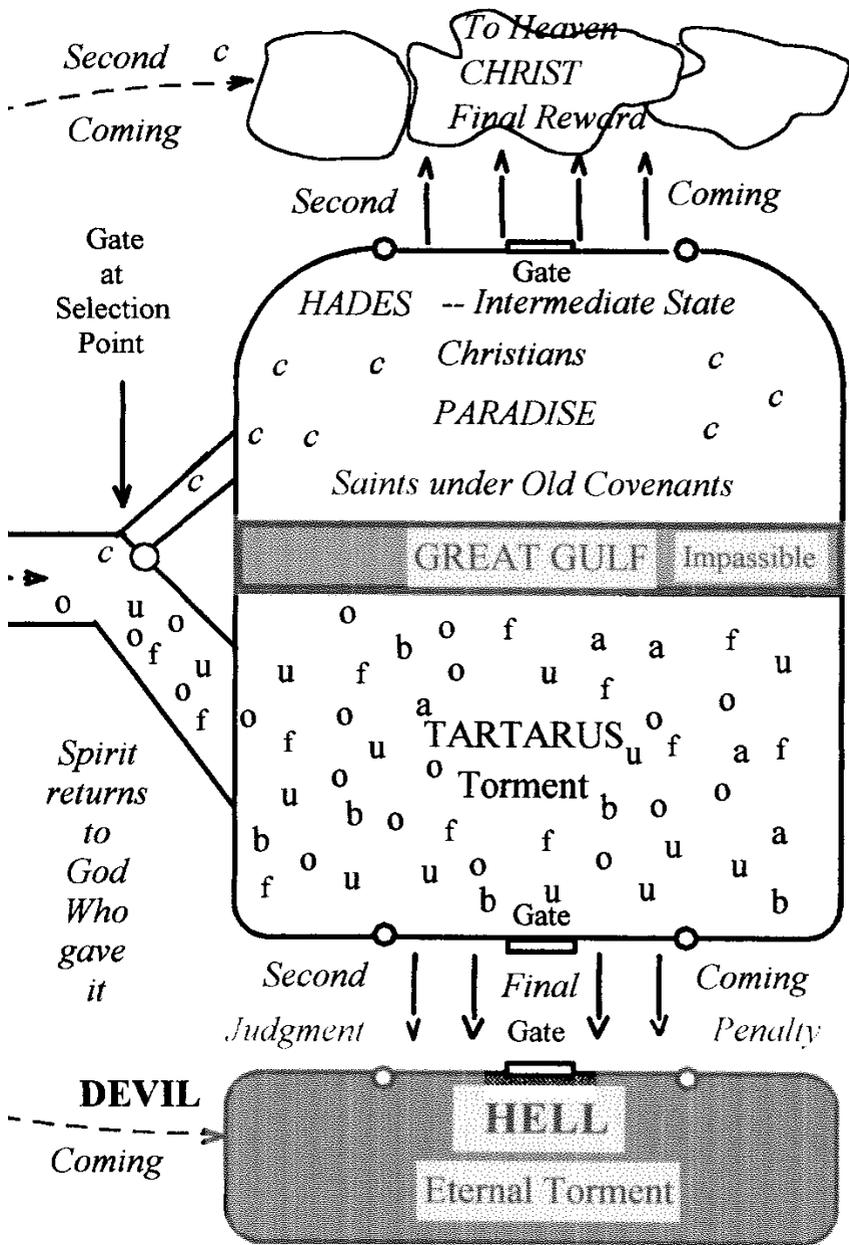
**AFTER DEATH-----**



- c* -- Christians
- b* -- backsliders
- f* -- followers
- a* -- agnostics
- u* -- unbelievers
- o* -- others

*Death*  
*Death*  
*Second*

*Herbert L Peterson*



which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

## Illustration Details

After this introduction, let us get to some explanation and discussion of the illustration that follows.

On the left is a circle representing the world that we live in. The arrangement of the circle and other parts of the illustration are drawn to show where the spirit goes after death. This shows Christians and other religious and nonreligious people. No percentage of population is implied. Christians are probably the smallest in number. The legend beside the circle identifies a few groups, or people.

At physical death, the body goes back to dust, Ge 2:7; 3:19; the spirit goes back to God who gave it. Ec 12:7. The spirit is, somehow, taken immediately through a selection process to determine where it is to be placed. It is understood that once the spirit leaves the person, at death, complete control is in the hand of God. Some things are described in the scriptures. We know that there are two places in Hades that holds them temporarily until Christ comes back again--the second coming. Hades loosely means it is a repository for the spirits of the dead. There are two places in it--the good and the bad. In Lu 16.23-31, Jesus relates the story of the Rich Man and the Beggar. The beggar was found to be in the good place—called Paradise. But the rich man found himself in the bad place—Tartarus, from the Greek noun transliterated as tartaros, mentioned in 2 Pet 2.4. Now, it is obvious that it is a holding place since Abraham had expired several centuries before the time of Jesus. During the discussion, Abraham mentioned several characteristics about Paradise. He said that there are two places--good and bad; there is a great gulf fixed between them that cannot be crossed either way; there is no way to communicate back to the outside; the bad place is a place of fire and torment.

It's interesting that each, the beggar and the rich man, found themselves in the respective places. It's obvious that, somehow, they were placed there. But how were they selected?

Now, back to the instant of death. The spirit is released and, somehow, is selected and moved to go to either the good place or

the bad place. The rich man and the beggar died under the Old Law. Who did the selection and what were the criteria? It wasn't the Devil, for we can guess that he would have dumped both into torment.

For judgment, there were many laws. There were the Ten Commandments. Ex 20.12-17. Then there were dozens of laws regarding religious observance in the sacrifices and then for personal behavior.

*Obedience* seems to be the word. Here are a few references.

Dt 26.16            Commanded to keep statutes and laws.

Dt 27.10            Obey the voice of the Lord.

Examples:

Ge 6.22            Noah followed commands

Ge 22.2            Abraham followed God's commands

Josh 11.15        Joshua did all commanded

2 K 18.6          Hezekiah . . . kept his commands

Lu 2.39            Joseph & Mary did all things re the law

Ac 26.19          Paul obeyed the heavenly vision

He 5.8            Jesus learned obedience through suffering

Rev 22.14        Obedience necessary for entrance to Heaven

Ps 62.12          Judgment according to works.

*Solomon sums it up.*

Ec 12.3 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

In the New Testament, again, obedience is preeminent. Here it is more like: Love Christ and keep His commandments.

Jn 14.15          "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

*John gives an explanation.*

Jn 3.16          "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Jn 3.18          "He that believeth on him is *not condemned*: but he that believeth not *is condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten (unique<sup>1</sup>) Son of God."

Jn 3.36          "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life:

and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

*Jesus said judgment is according to works.*

Mt 16.27 “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

Rev 20.12 “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

From the many scriptures, it appears that obedience and works are the leading criteria. This means: to abide by and keep his commandments, and live a fruitful life in the Lord.

Looking back at Jesus’ teaching, he is demanding the same characteristic as under the law, i.e., strict obedience. This brings us again to point out one essential requirement, which was, and is: to get into Christ and His Blood—and that is only by baptism into His death and blood for the remission of sins

*Jesus said a man must be born again.*

Jn 3.5 “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he *cannot enter* into the kingdom of God.”

Therefore, a true Christian believes in Christ, follows his commandments to be baptized for the remission of sins, and lives a faithful and fruitful life in the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Unique—meaning one of a kind from McCord, Hugo. *New Testament*. Freed-Hardeman College, 1988 524 pp.

## **Regarding the requirements to be a Christian**

From all the scriptures we know, that we can find and put together, several things that are required to be a Christian

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|-----------------|--|
| <i>Hear</i>     | Everyone in the world should have the gospel taken to them so that they will hear about it. Ro 10:14 |
| <i>Believe.</i> | Believe to be saved. Mk 16:16  |
| <i>Repent.</i>  | He must not only be sorry for his sins, but actually   |

	turn around or away from them.	Lu 13:3,5
<i>Confess.</i>	Confess Jesus as Lord.	Ro 10:9,10
<i>Baptized.</i>	He must be baptized by immersion for the remission of sins. See early discussions.	Acts 2:38
<i>Continue.</i>	Then live a good life in the Lord. These have been designated a small italic c for Christian--"c."	

### **Remarks on some theories.**

#### 1. Moving a spirit from Tartarus to Paradise.

Some groups teach and practice, as if this can be done, for someone, whom they think might be in the bad place--Tartarus. They believe they can get a backslider over across the divide into Paradise.

There are at least two reasons for this impossibility.

- a. Abraham, in Lu 10.23, said it can't be done.
- b. Jesus taught that the works of the person during *his life time* on earth determines the person's future status.

#### 2. Marriage vows for the dead.

As mentioned, before, the status after death cannot be changed.

#### 3. Backsliders.

There is a myth that, "once a Christian, always a Christian," and, hence, one is assured of everlasting life.

Not so, say the scriptures. He still has freedom of choice and, further, may not choose wisely. Backsliders will find their spirits in Tartarus. Designated "b."

#### 4. Regarding the status of others who are followers and consider themselves to be Christians.

Concerning the practice of asking a convert to just say, "I believe," or "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," to put him into Christ.

There are any number of preachers, teachers and church groups who teach and practice this, instead of going through with baptism. This radical practice is not what was done in N.T. times, under the teaching of inspired Apostles.

But, then, how does he wash away his past sins? How does this put one into the death and blood of Christ? Why is this important? Well, baptism by immersion is the ONLY way to get sins washed away and to get into Christ. ONLY the blood of Christ can take away sins. Church rules can't do it. This is what Jesus commanded and the Apostles followed it. There are several examples in Acts.

Look at all the commandments in the O.T. and N.T.. An action has to follow to carry out the command. No amount of thinking can do it.

It is so painful to think of the situation. Here we have millions of earnest followers of Christ that have been misled by the myth. They are expecting a happy union with the Lord in heaven. However, from an analysis of the scriptural requirements, it is obvious that those unfortunate ones have been led astray, and will be down into Tartarus with thieves and murderers, and later into Hell, where there will be fire and brimstone and torment for all eternity. These have been labeled "f" for Followers of Christ.

*Postscript.*

If you are a Christian, persevere; if not, please reconsider.  
While living, still a chance to change; but, after death, no chance.  
Warning: If not baptized properly into Christ, can't get to heaven.

*Jesus has a plea for you.*

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Mt 11:28.

Will you come?

## Monitoring Man?

It's a mystery. How does God keep track of us?

We are created in the image of God, and the spirit dwells in us. Gen 1:26; I Co 3:16,17. Solomon says God knows our innermost thoughts, Prov 20:27. God dwells in us as a Christian, I Jn 4.12,13.

During our life time we have freedom of choice but, He cautions against sinful acts. Then at the end of our life, the spirit goes back to God who has control of it. The spirit of the faithful Christian goes into Paradise, in Hades, then on into heaven and eternal life. Where the spirit goes depends on our *works* during our lifetime.

So how does God keep track of our every day life? We have our modern people-to-people communications that are really complex. But God's system must be the ultimate. At the end, does the spirit carry information stored in the brain that can be scanned for pre-selection?

If Solomon was correct, then God knows our *present* thoughts. This should give us pause to reflect on our life. It should be a jolt for a wake-up call to the non-Christian and a reassurance to the faithful Christian.

How? Stranger than fiction, one can think of lines of spiritual sensory perception to each of us, with information going to a heavenly recorder running continuously.

All this to say, *reevaluate your spiritual life*. It's better late than never!

Herbert L Peterson  
Church of Christ Oxon Hill  
Temple Hills, MD 20748  
Tel 301 894 5412

